Interreg

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Central Baltic Programme

Silver Careers

Senior needs analysis summary

1. Project background

Silver Careers is a cross-border cooperation project implemented in Latvia, Estonia and Finland under the Interreg Central Baltic Programme 2021–2027, Programme Objective 6: Improved employment opportunities on the labour market.

The project aims to improve employment opportunities for people aged 55 and over by strengthening work-related digital competences, career-management skills and confidence in the labour market. It responds to digital skills gaps, age-related barriers and the underused professional potential of older workers. The approach combines practical learning, career support, employer engagement and cross-border cooperation.

2. Partnership and partner contributions

Partner	Country	Needs analysis dataset
Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), lead partner	Latvia	49 survey responses
Latvian Adult Education Association (LAEA)	Latvia	17 survey responses
Pärnu County Development Centre	Estonia	162 survey responses
Turku University of Applied Sciences (TUAS)	Finland	12 survey responses

The four partner organisations contribute complementary perspectives from business, adult education, regional development and higher education. They collected responses from the target group in their respective countries. The Latvian results combine the two partner samples for country-level comparisons, while preserving their separate source counts.

The project addresses a structural challenge shared by the Central Baltic countries: longer working lives are becoming increasingly important, yet older employees may encounter rapid technological change, changing recruitment practices and limited opportunities to update or communicate their skills. The project therefore approaches employability as a combination of digital capability, career-management competence, recognition of prior experience and support from employers.

The intended training approach is not limited to jobseekers. Employees wishing to remain in their current positions, people considering a new role, and individuals approaching retirement may require different forms of guidance. Understanding this diversity is essential for designing relevant learning activities.

3. Project objectives and expected results

- Improve the employability and labour-market competitiveness of people aged 55+ in the Central Baltic region.
- Develop and deliver a joint one-year learning programme combining digital skills, career management, workshops, coaching, individual and team tasks, and local and international sessions.

- Engage employers in identifying workplace needs and supporting older employees.
- Reach 140 participants aged 55+ in the programme, with at least 120 completing it and receiving certificates.
- Organise at least 80 cross-border mobilities and create a sustainable, transferable training approach.

The partnership combines complementary institutional perspectives. LCCI connects the project to employers and workplace skills requirements; LAEA contributes an adult-learning and lifelong-learning perspective; Pärnu County Development Centre provides an Estonian regional and employment-development perspective; and TUAS contributes expertise from applied higher education and professional learning. Their survey contributions differ in volume, but all are analysed using the same thematic framework.

Latvia accounts for 66 responses collected through two partners, whereas Estonia and Finland are represented by one dataset each. These figures describe the collected survey sample, not the relative size or importance of each partner's target population. The Estonian sample is substantially larger and therefore has greater influence on unweighted totals across all 240 respondents.

4. Needs analysis: activity and purpose

According to the approved project application, this needs analysis falls under Work Package 1: "Designing and Implementing Program of Work-related Digital and Career Management Skills for 55+", Activity 1.1: "Designing the program of SilverCareers workshops and selecting participants". It contributes to Deliverable D.1.1.3: "Needs analysis results and terms of reference for the programme and participants' selection process".

Deliverable D.1.1.3 requires the partnership to summarise two perspectives: employers and employees aged 55+ (including unemployed people aged 55+), drawing on surveys and interviews to identify digital-skills needs at workplaces and perceptions of careers. The findings must inform the design of the training modules and participant-selection process. This report covers only the employee survey component: 240 responses across four partner datasets in Latvia, Estonia and Finland. Employer interviews and other employer evidence must be analysed separately before the full deliverable is considered complete (application, p. 36).

The practical objective of the needs analysis is to connect the planned learning programme with the experiences expressed by the target group. The survey asks not only what respondents cannot do, but also what they already do well, how they see their future working lives, whether they feel valued and which skills would make a meaningful difference in their employment.

The analysis considers fourteen questionnaire topics, including employment status, three-to-five-year career intentions, confidence and recognition at work, strengths, missing competences, perceived age-related barriers, discrimination, personal-development needs, career-management skills, training preferences, current digital tools, difficult digital tasks, desired digital skills and interest in training.

The evidence is interpreted at two levels: country profiles describe the responses within each national sample, while the cross-country comparison identifies recurring learning themes and differences in emphasis. The sample sizes are unequal, especially in Finland (n = 12), so percentages should be read together with the respondent counts. Multi-select questions measure the share selecting each option and should not be summed to 100%.

Methodological considerations for interpreting the results

The evidence consists of 240 responses from four partner datasets: Latvia—49 LCCI and 17 LAEA; Estonia—162; Finland—12. The samples were gathered through partner networks and differ substantially in size. In particular, Estonia accounts for 67.5% of all responses, Latvia for 27.5% and Finland for 5.0%. For that reason, country-specific results are emphasised over pooled totals; comparisons describe the respondents reached, not national populations.

Percentages use the relevant partner or country denominator, as explicitly indicated. Multiple-choice questions can produce totals above 100%. Some source materials provide respondent-level data and others aggregated counts, limiting the detail that can be reconstructed consistently. Questions about confidence, work intentions and digital learning preferences are self-reported perceptions, not objective skill tests. Small differences in the Finnish sample should not be interpreted as national patterns.

5. Survey results and cross-country comparison

The survey is intended to inform programme design rather than provide a nationally representative estimate of the 55+ workforce. Its value lies in showing how respondents connect their existing experience with future career goals and practical learning needs. The following results use the same dimensions for all three countries and report exact frequencies where they can be established.

5.1. Country profiles

Latvia | n = 66

LCCI: 34/49 (69.4%) are employed full-time; 32/49 (65.3%) want to continue in their current job; 32/49 (65.3%) definitely feel confident, respected and needed. LAEA: 9/17 (52.9%) definitely feel confident and 7/17 (41.2%) partly so. Together, 41/66 (62.1%) report definite confidence.

In the LAEA digital-skills question, 11/17 (64.7%) selected mobile-device use, 9/17 (52.9%) cybersecurity and 8/17 (47.1%) AI. The LCCI responses add substantial interest in AI and other workplace tools (see chart). These results suggest hands-on digital learning and practical career-management support.

Interpretation of Latvian responses

The two Latvian partner samples should not be treated as interchangeable. In the LCCI sample, 32 of 49 respondents (65.3%) preferred to remain in their current jobs; this points to continued employment and adapting to changing tasks as important contexts for learning. The LAEA sample identifies specific desired areas—mobile devices (11/17), cybersecurity (9/17) and AI (8/17)—but these are selections by 17 respondents, not rates for all 66 Latvian participants.

For workplace confidence, the combined Latvian counts are 41/66 (62.1%) definitely, 23/66 (34.8%) partly and 2/66 (3.0%) not confident, respected or needed. The 23 partial responses matter: they indicate a sizeable group whose experience of recognition is positive but qualified. These answers should not be presented as a direct measure of employer attitudes.

Estonia | n = 162

78/162 (48.1%) work full-time; 22/162 (13.6%) are self-employed/business owners. For future career intentions, 39/162 (24.1%) want to stay in their current job, while 31/162 (19.1%) want to find a new job. Workplace confidence: 70/162 (43.2%) definitely, 69/162 (42.6%) partly, and 23/162 (14.2%) no. This is a more varied profile of employment and career intentions than in the LCCI sample.

Estonian respondents frequently selected AI tools, alongside other digital workplace skills. The detailed distribution is shown below; digital options are counted as selected/not selected for each respondent.

Interpretation of Estonian responses

The Estonian dataset is the largest (162 respondents) and includes different employment situations: 78 full-time employees (48.1%) and 22 self-employed respondents or business owners (13.6%). It is therefore important to distinguish learning for continued employment from learning for career transition or independent work. Among respondents, 39 (24.1%) selected staying in their current job and 31 (19.1%) finding new work; these are not the only possible intentions.

Confidence responses are relatively distributed: 70 (43.2%) definitely, 69 (42.6%) partly and 23 (14.2%) no. This distribution suggests that uncertainty about professional recognition should be considered alongside technical learning interests. The strong appearance of AI in the selected digital-skills options should be interpreted as expressed interest in learning, not evidence of current AI use or a measured competence deficit.

Finland | n = 12

9/12 (75.0%) work full-time. Career intentions include finding a new job (5/12, 41.7%), remaining in the current role (3/12, 25.0%) and reducing workload (2/12, 16.7%). Confidence is definite for 3/12 (25.0%), partial for 8/12 (66.7%) and absent for 1/12 (8.3%). The open responses repeatedly mention recognition of experience, age-related prejudice and communicating professional value. In digital-skills preferences, AI is selected by 3/12 (25.0%).

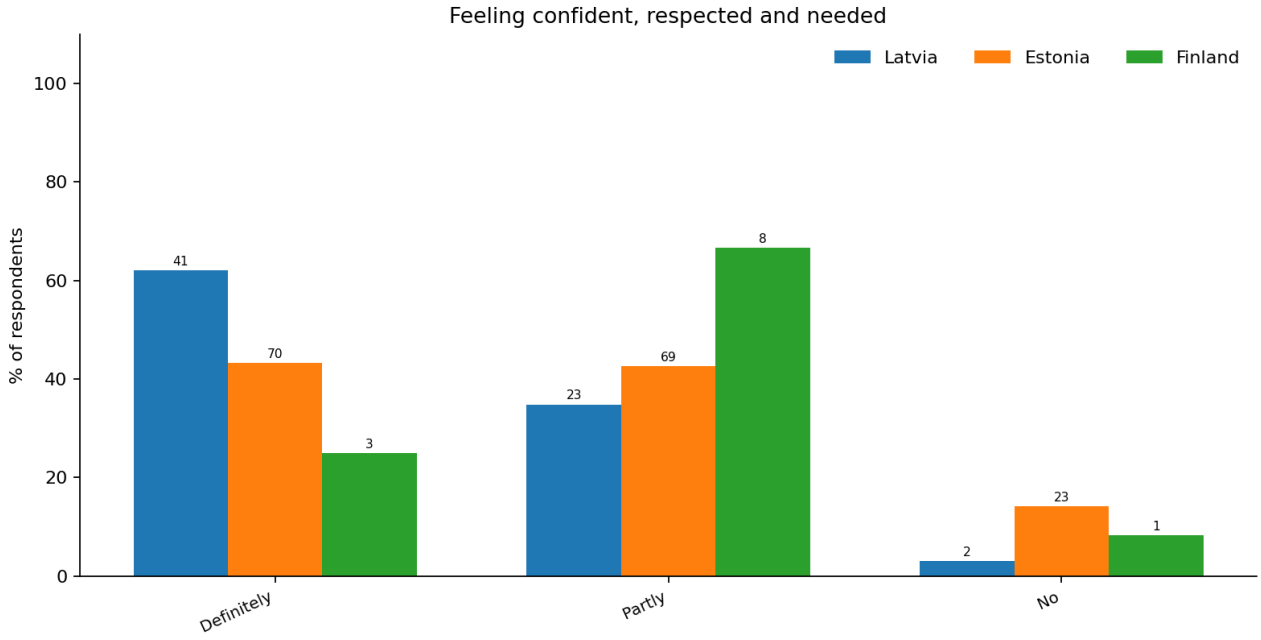
Interpretation of Finnish responses

Among 12 Finnish respondents, 5 (41.7%) expressed an intention to find a new job, compared with 3 (25.0%) wishing to remain in their current position and 2 (16.7%) wishing to reduce their workload. These responses show different possible pathways within this small group; they cannot establish the relative prevalence of those intentions among older workers in Finland.

Only 3 respondents (25.0%) selected the strongest positive workplace-confidence answer, while 8 (66.7%) selected partly and 1 (8.3%) no. Open responses refer to

experience, professional recognition and communicating skills. Three of 12 respondents (25.0%) selected AI as a desired digital learning area. With n = 12, one response changes a percentage by 8.3 percentage points; narrative interpretation should therefore take precedence over rankings.

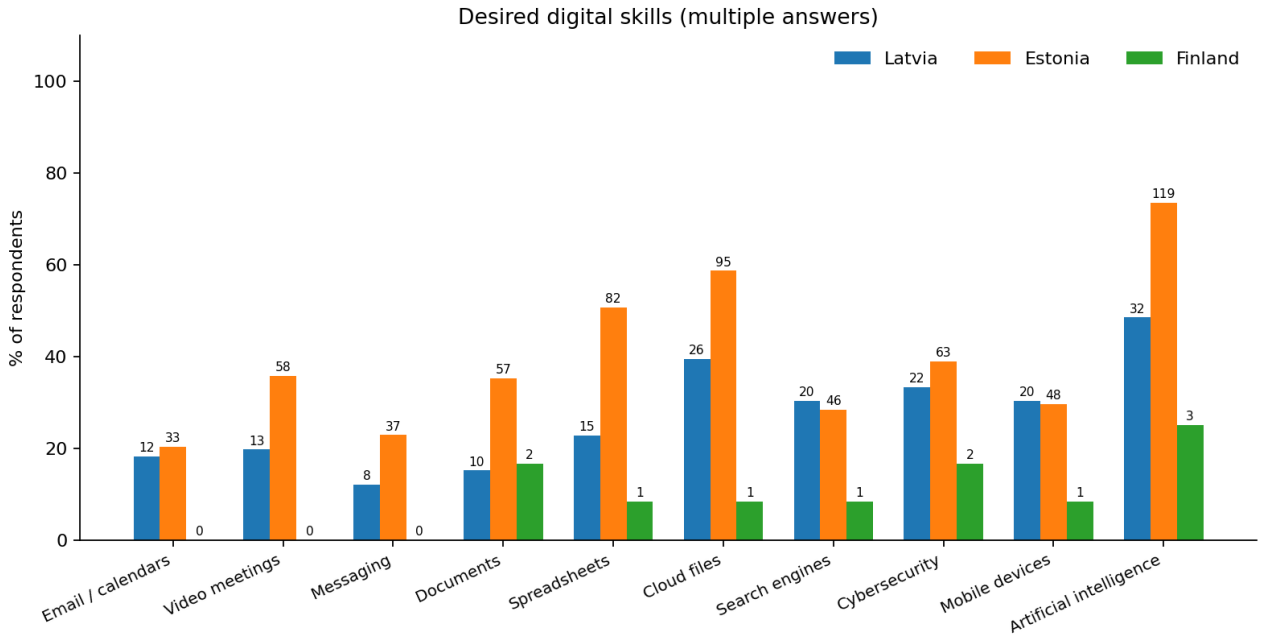
5.2. Cross-country comparison



The chart shows a marked difference in definite workplace confidence: Latvia 62.1%, Estonia 43.2%, Finland 25.0%. In Finland most respondents selected “partly”, not “no”; small sample sizes make the Finnish percentages especially sensitive to individual answers.

How to read the figures

The confidence chart plots percentages on its vertical axis, but the numbers printed above the bars are respondent counts. Thus, the values 41, 70 and 3 above the “Definitely” bars are counts for Latvia, Estonia and Finland, respectively—not percentages. The digital-skills chart follows the same convention and allows multiple selections. Comparisons should use the percentage bar heights and the country denominators rather than comparing the raw labels across differently sized samples.



Numbers above the bars indicate respondents, while bar height represents the share within the country. Latvia combines 49 LCCI and 17 LAEA answers. Multiple choices were allowed; therefore totals across categories exceed the number of respondents. The Finnish PDF and LAEA PDF contain aggregated chart counts, while the LCCI and Estonian counts are derived from individual response records.

In Latvia, the two partner samples provide complementary perspectives. The LCCI group includes a large proportion of respondents already working full-time and wishing to maintain their present roles. This points to a need for training that improves day-to-day effectiveness and supports retention, not only career change. In the LAEA group, respondents specifically selected smartphone or tablet use, cybersecurity and AI as areas for improvement. This suggests that a practical, accessible digital-skills offer would address expressed needs.

The Estonian sample contains a wider spread of employment situations and future intentions. Among 162 respondents, 78 were employed full-time and 22 were self-employed or business owners. Staying in the current position was selected by 39 respondents, while 31 wished to find a new job. This diversity supports offering alternative learning routes, including skills for current employment, professional repositioning and job search.

In Finland, 9 of 12 respondents worked full-time, but 5 wished to find a new job. Only 3 respondents definitely felt valued, confident and needed, while 8 answered partly. The qualitative answers point to concern about how employers recognise experience, alongside interest in AI, professional communication and presenting skills. Because this is a small group, individual answers have a large effect on percentages.

5.3. Key differences

Dimension	Latvia	Estonia	Finland
Sample size	66	162	12
Definitely confident	41 (62.1%)	70 (43.2%)	3 (25.0%)
Full-time employment	LCCI 34/49 (69.4%); LAEA not reliably extractable from chart	78 (48.1%)	9 (75.0%)
Future career direction	LCCI 32/49 (65.3%) remain in role	39/162 (24.1%) remain; 31/162 (19.1%) find work	5/12 (41.7%) find work

Latvia's LCCI subgroup is predominantly oriented towards continuity in the current job. Estonia includes a wider mix of employment situations and intentions. The small Finnish group shows a relatively strong interest in finding new work and concerns about professional recognition. These are sample-level observations, not population estimates.

The workplace-confidence results are particularly informative. In Latvia, 41 of 66 respondents (62.1%) gave the strongest positive response, compared with 70 of 162 (43.2%) in Estonia and 3 of 12 (25.0%) in Finland. These differences do not prove that one national labour market treats older employees better than another; the samples were recruited separately and are not representative. They do, however, suggest that confidence-building and the recognition of prior learning should be visible components of the training programme.

Career intentions also differ. Within the LCCI sample, 32 of 49 respondents (65.3%) wished to continue in their current position. In Estonia, the corresponding response was 39 of 162 (24.1%), while 31 of 162 (19.1%) wished to find work. In Finland, 5 of 12 (41.7%) indicated finding a new job and 3 of 12 (25.0%) staying in their present role. The questions were comparable, but differences in recruitment and sample composition mean the results should be used as programme-planning signals rather than national rankings.

5.4. Common needs and implications

Across the three datasets, AI and digital workplace tools appear as learning interests. Career development also extends beyond technical skills: respondents mention recognition of experience, confidence, adapting to change and communicating professional value. Training should combine practical digital workshops with career reflection, professional self-presentation and opportunities for peer learning.

Recommended programme structure: (1) AI and everyday digital tools; (2) digital security and information management; (3) mapping and communicating transferable experience; (4) career planning and job transitions; (5) confidence, adaptability and intergenerational cooperation. Offer modular activities so learners with different starting skills can select relevant topics.

The evidence supports a programme with a shared core and room for adaptation. Digital learning should cover practical tasks and AI in a workplace context, including safe information handling, document creation and efficient use of everyday tools. Respondents who already use digital systems may benefit more from applied, intermediate exercises

than introductory instruction. A diagnostic approach at the beginning of training would help avoid repeating skills participants already possess.

Career-management training should help participants identify transferable strengths, communicate professional value and make realistic plans for the next three to five years. For people seeking a new job, this can include presenting experience to employers and preparing for career transitions. For people remaining in employment, the focus may be on adapting to changing tasks, maintaining confidence and continuing to contribute expertise.

The programme should also recognise the importance of learning methods. The LAEA open responses include a preference for participatory, hands-on learning rather than passive lectures. This is consistent with a programme design built around guided practice, peer exchange, individual tasks and direct application to work situations. The country-specific modules and examples can then be adjusted without changing the overall programme objectives.

5.6. Senior and employer perspectives: complementary evidence

The companion employer report is based on 18 qualitative interviews (Latvia 9, Estonia 4, Finland 5). Its findings should be read alongside, not merged statistically with, the 240 senior survey responses. The employer interviews emphasise the practical use of employee portals, e-signatures, authentication, files and role-specific systems. Senior respondents identify interest in AI and other digital tools, including cybersecurity and mobile devices. These are complementary perspectives on digital participation, not identical questionnaire measures.

Career development is another area of convergence. The senior survey records different intentions—remaining in work, seeking a new job or reducing workload—while employers describe retaining experience, adapting responsibilities, mentoring and supporting transitions. Both sources challenge the idea that the 55+ group has one uniform career goal. However, employer interviews cannot be used to explain an individual survey respondent’s answer or to estimate how widespread a view is.

Both reports also suggest the importance of supportive learning conditions. Employer interviewees describe hands-on exercises and guidance in actual work processes; senior open responses indicate a preference for participatory learning. These observations support a differentiated interpretation of needs, but they should remain attributed to their respective sources.

5.5. What respondents’ answers reveal about learning and career pathways

The survey findings point to several distinct participant situations rather than a single “older learner” profile. Some respondents want to retain their existing position while adapting to new systems; others are considering a new job, reduced workload or a different way of using accumulated experience. Their learning needs can therefore differ even when they select the same digital topic.

The prominence of AI-related options does not displace everyday digital foundations. Interest in cybersecurity, mobile-device use, document tools and workplace applications indicates that digital confidence may depend on routine, practical tasks. The responses

also show why career-management learning is relevant alongside technical training: confidence, recognition of expertise and the ability to describe transferable skills influence how people see their future work.

Learning format is part of the needs picture. The LAEA open responses favour active, participatory practice. These findings support describing accessible practice and peer exchange as expressed learning preferences, while avoiding claims that a particular format is preferred by all respondents in all three countries.

6. Conclusions

The needs analysis provides a substantive basis for designing the Silver Careers learning programme around the actual circumstances of respondents aged 55 and above. Across the three countries, the survey reflects a combination of considerable professional experience, continuing interest in employment and development, and a need to adapt to changing technologies and labour-market expectations. The findings do not support treating older employees as a single group with identical skills gaps.

The quantitative results show important variation in career orientation and confidence. In the LCCI sample, 32 of 49 respondents (65.3%) wished to stay in their current roles, whereas the Finnish sample included 5 of 12 respondents (41.7%) wishing to find a new job. The strongest positive workplace-confidence response was selected by 41 of 66 respondents in Latvia (62.1%), 70 of 162 in Estonia (43.2%) and 3 of 12 in Finland (25.0%). These figures are descriptive results of the collected samples, not representative national comparisons.

The findings point to three connected programme priorities. First, digital and AI-related learning should be practical and directly applicable to work, with opportunities to improve digital security and everyday productivity. Second, career-management learning should enable participants to identify, articulate and use the value of their experience, whether they intend to remain employed, change roles or seek work. Third, confidence, adaptability and communication should be integrated into the learning process rather than treated as secondary topics.

The partnership should therefore retain a common training structure across Latvia, Estonia and Finland while allowing flexibility in examples, exercises and the level of digital instruction. Initial skills assessment, active learning methods and opportunities for peer exchange would make the programme more relevant to participants with different professional backgrounds. Employer involvement is important so that the learning outcomes correspond to workplace needs and contribute to recognition of older workers' capabilities.

Overall, the analysis supports the project's objective of improving employability among people aged 55+. Its main implication is that effective support must build on existing professional strengths while addressing current digital demands and future career choices. The survey findings should guide curriculum content, pilot testing and subsequent refinement of the Silver Careers training programme.