Digitalisation Must Not Push Older Employees Out of the Labour Market. MENDELU Leads European Research Seeking Solutions

The rapid development of digital technologies is changing the way people work across professions and generations. The international research network DIGI-net, led by Mendel University in Brno, focuses on how these changes affect older employees and what new opportunities and inequalities they bring to the European labour market.

The research team examines how digitalisation, automation and the development of artificial intelligence affect the working conditions of employees aged 50 and over, as well as their position in the labour market. The researchers investigate, for example, inequalities between younger and older workers, age-related organisational culture, and the relationship between workplace digitalisation and health. They also focus on developing and implementing practical measures in response to digitalisation and analyse social media, corporate communication and news media that reflect, reinforce or spread stereotypes about older workers in the digital age.

“The aim of the project is to show that older employees are not an obstacle to digital transformation, but an important part of it. Digitalisation can make work easier and more efficient and open up new opportunities, but only if it is introduced sensitively and with respect for different life and work experiences. If organisations underestimate training, support and intergenerational cooperation, new technologies may instead increase stress, insecurity and inequalities in the labour market,” said Martina Rašticová, project coordinator and Vice-Rector for Internationalisation at MENDELU.

One of the project’s key findings is that older employees do not form a homogeneous group. Their experiences with technology vary according to profession, education, health status, previous career path and the level of support provided by their employer. The research also shows that the problem is often not age itself, but rather the way technologies are introduced in the workplace. When employees are not given enough time, training and space to adapt, digitalisation can increase technostress, feelings of insecurity and concerns about losing competence.

According to the researchers, it is therefore essential that companies and public institutions approach digitalisation as a social and organisational change, rather than merely as a technical process. Recommended measures include accessible and practically oriented training, involving employees in the implementation of new technologies, supporting intergenerational knowledge-sharing, age-inclusive HR policies and sensitive communication that does not reinforce the stereotype that older people are unable to adapt to digital change.

Within the project, MENDELU has focused particularly on coordinating the entire international network, preparing research and science communication outputs, organising expert meetings, and connecting academic research with practice and public policy. Researchers have addressed topics including technostress, ageism in the workplace, stereotypes in recruitment, the impact of digitalisation on the employability of people aged 50 and over, and ways to create more inclusive

working environments. The project has not focused on a single company, but rather on broader European comparisons and the sharing of knowledge among research teams from different countries.

Mendel University has coordinated the project since its launch in 2022 within the framework of European Cooperation in Science and Technology, known as COST. Over the course of the project, the research network has brought together universities and research teams from 39 European countries. During the four-year period, the network has produced academic publications, analyses, policy briefs, a web platform focused on ageing and work in the digital era, as well as popular science podcasts bringing the topic closer to the wider public.

The results of the four-year collaboration were presented by participants at the DIGI-net Final Conference 2026, hosted by Mendel University in early June. The conference brought together research teams, practitioners and policymakers working on the relationship between digitalisation, population ageing and changes in the labour market. Over three days, it provided a platform for sharing the latest research findings and discussing how to create fairer and more inclusive workplaces in a period of rapid technological development.

More information about the project: Action CA21107 – COST