BRIDGE

Bridging the Gap –
Policy Brief
Recommendations

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Part 3
Bridging the Gap
Policy Brief

A) Introduction

Today's megatrends that are affecting the society and workplace are the demographic change, digitalisation and technological change, climate change and the green transition among others. Employees, organisations and policymakers should be aware of these megatrends and make it a priority to develop appropriate tools and practices to benefit from different generations' potential, experience and skills. In this policy brief, we will focus on **the impact of the demographic change at the workplace** and **the importance of improving intergenerational dialogue between colleagues with different experiences.**

The aim of the **BRIDGE** (Breaching Reservation and Improving Dialogue through Generational Exchange) project is to promote and strengthen intergenerational dialogue in youth and social work organisations. The project focuses on the importance of improving intergenerational dialogue between junior and senior youth workers by identifying their strengths, knowledge and competencies. It also investigates effective formal and informal methods to transfer knowledge from senior to junior staff and vice versa. Two outputs have been published in the framework of the project: a framework concept "Building Bridges – Potentials & Tools" and a handbook "Crossing Bridges – Transfer & Anchor".

The policy brief *Bridging the Gap* **builds on BRIDGE project's learnings, two outputs published before, and the two trainings** which took place in Bologna (IT) and Örebro (SE). It is a result of project partners' contributions which gathered recommendations directly from youth and social workers and organisations. These recommendations aim to provide fresh ideas to raise awareness on the impact of demographic change in the workplace and to improve intergenerational dialogue between younger and senior workers to create a more inclusive and productive work environment for all. We further aim to bridge the gap between the policy and practice for a better-quality youth and social work.

Thus, we provide recommendations for the following target groups:

- Youth and Social Workers/Staff;
- Youth and Social Work Organisations;
- Policymakers at EU, regional, national and local levels.

These target groups are crucial because the policy brief will show:

- what employees can do to strengthen the dialogue and solidarity with their colleagues from other generations;
- what organisations can do to improve intergenerational dialogue at their workplace;
- what policymakers can do to raise awareness on the generational gap at the workplace and to support organisations and employees.

B) Recommendations

1. Level of Staff

We propose recommendations for youth workers/staff concerning their **attitude, knowledge and practice**. With these recommendations we aim to provide suggestions for employees on how to better adjust their attitude towards the other generation, how to share their knowledge more effectively and what methods they can use in their practice.

> ### Be open to learn from each other

Younger and older staff may sometimes face different challenges at the workplace, yet they often have shared struggles and aspirations. There are simply different approaches to achieve or implement same goals. These ways can differ from generation to generation or one person to another. Professionals should **be open to other perspectives and ways of working**. In this way they can **benefit from the diversity of knowledge and experiences** to enrich their learning while reflecting on different working methods. Colleagues should have the openness to understand different backgrounds and experiences. Embracing different backgrounds, knowledge and skills will enrichen the teams within organisations.

Value **constructive feedback:** The staff should share their experience with each other where they highlight what has gone well or not in their daily work. This is important in order not to make the same mistakes again, facilitate in the work and give advice for efficiency. Practicing the perspective of others would help to embrace differences.

For new colleagues as well as experienced ones, teams should always have **a welcome culture** and ensure a welcoming and friendly atmosphere. In this way, everyone would feel comfortable with sharing their perspective and be open to learn from others.

> ### Create informal exchange opportunities

The basis of dialogue is the recognition of one's own identity and of one's own diversity, considered as values. As mentioned in the BRIDGE Handbook, it is necessary to **create opportunities for socialisation** and meetings within the organisations, both through **informal settings** (e.g., coffee breaks to be encouraged and not to be stigmatized) and **formal settings** (e.g., transversal, even non-technical professional training moments, where the intergenerational encounter is one of the impact effects).

Sharing different experiences in a more relaxed environment might foster better understanding among colleagues on a more personal level. These could be through joint business lunches to discuss intergenerational topics or misunderstandings and/or to prepare intergenerational discussion groups.

*Be mindful of **mental health:*** In these informal meetings, people might feel more at ease to share about their stress or problems than in formal meetings. It is important to know how to build an understanding of mental health and well-being, especially as a post-COVID-19 phenomena. Knowing more about what is stressing the employees and in which work context can allow to have an understanding about stressful issues and to acknowledge how to handle a high workload. Juniors and seniors might have different strategies to cope with stress, which can cause misunderstandings at the workplace. However, when shared with each other, these misunderstandings can easily be resolved.

Form intergenerational teams and tandems

Cooperation with the other generation should be encouraged in teams. Junior and senior staff can form **tandems between each other and work closely together**. For example, they can perform their daily work, participate in meetings and go on business trips as tandems of juniors and seniors. The colleagues can then reflect on the cooperation together by giving constructive feedback. This is crucial to **learn from each other's experiences, shadow each other and continuously follow each other in daily work** to gain broad competences.

The staff should take advantage of the moments where junior and senior workers are together to **exchange suggestions, problems and solutions**. Particularly for junior workers, sharing a problem or a doubt with a senior can help to better identify possible solutions, or to propose their point of view without fear of appearing trivial or inappropriate.

Map staff's competencies: Everybody has different knowledge and skills to offer, especially when it comes to different generations. Colleagues should be aware of their own knowledge and skills as well as of others. Based on **mapping the staff's competencies**, colleagues can share their knowledge and skills with one another. In this way, they can benefit from everyone's expertise, professional experience and education, as well as extra skills out of profession.

Implement Intergenerational Learning at the workplace

Intergenerational Learning (IL) is one of the most effective methods to improve the communication and cooperation between colleagues. It is defined as the **process in which people of all ages learn together and from each other**. Intergenerational learning occurs when projects or activities are purposefully planned to include one, or several, learning aims and outcomes across the generations[1]. This type of learning could take place in formal, non-formal or informal settings, and one or more of its primary aims include an **intergenerational learning outcome**. An important feature for success of intergenerational learning is the **availability of deliberate and systematic guidance to facilitate the process**.

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[1] Generations Working Together (n.d.), *Learning through Intergenerational Practice,* Available online: https://bit.ly/44hxbEx, accessed on 2 May 2023.

Promote mentoring: **Mentoring and reverse mentoring**[2] are big parts of intergenerational learning. Most are familiar with the concept of a mentor at work who is usually a more experienced, frequently senior colleague who empowers a less experienced, often younger colleague by sharing their knowledge and experience. When organisations dedicate employee hours to mentoring junior staff, young professionals get to benefit from senior employees' experience. At the same time, enabling seniors to act as mentors can improve their engagement within teams and organisations. In order to have a uniform procedure for mentoring in an organisation, guidelines are helpful both for mentors and mentees.

Reverse mentoring is another possible way to bridge the age and generational gap within the workforce. **Young professionals also have a lot to teach respectively**, especially in youth and social work sector. Junior staff are closer to the target group, and they can share their perspectives with senior staff while working with and for young people. Reverse and reciprocal mentoring have been often used to introduce new fresh ideas, solutions and technology to senior staff. Reverse mentoring is a bridge-building exercise between the generations where the conversation can range from integrating new digital communications tools to discussing what younger people believe the world of work should look like.

2. Level of Organisations

In a new type of society with fewer young people and young adults, more older workers, pensioners, and elderly people, organisations need to **discover new ways of benefiting from junior and senior workers' potential**. In the field of youth and social work, this poses major changes and sometimes challenges for organisations.

The world we are working in is changing. New working conditions are developing with more flexibility in the working hours and remote working arrangements. It can be a trend in the future to work four instead of five days a week and/or having longer breaks in the working routine for sport activities or for family reasons. With our recommendations we aim to give fresh ideas to organisations on how they can adjust themselves to the changing workplace while improving the intergenerational dialogue between staff.

Reinforce the identification between the employee, team and organisation

We have observed with the BRIDGE project that the **identification with the employer, the identification with the team and the work differs depending on the generation**, and how long someone is part of the organisation. Organisations should find their „unique selling point" in terms of goals, target groups, areas of work both for their services and for employees. Innovative and flexible working methods and a management culture open for contributions can create incentives for employees to be more satisfied with their work and identify more with their organisations. These include offering fair and appropriate salary, full or part time working, mobile working arrangements, flexible working time and other benefits. Building an identification with the employer should **never be a one-way street** but **requires an awareness of different work approaches across the generations**. This means

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[2] whereby a younger employee mentors an older, more senior employee

to foster acceptance and integration of methods provided by all generations based on the organisation's needs.

The big challenge for organisations is to be attractive for young professionals and to develop a certain "magnetic effect" to keep young talents, and this is easier when organisations have a clear vision and a mission. This is important because without young professionals, there cannot be successful intergenerational dialogue at the workplace. More than ever, organisations need to face the changes brought about by organisational development processes. The balancing act is between developing ways to respond to requests (e.g., part-time instead of full-time, longer time off for family, personnel development, travel, etc.) and continuing to provide services with high quality.

Especially because of the big lack of skilled professionals in youth and social work, these arrangements would in return benefit the organisation and keep the staff more engaged. On the other hand, there is more fluctuation in the organisations and labour market, especially among junior staff (in the context that they are more often willing to change employers). To prevent this from happening, organisations should invest more in team building, an enrichment, recognising and considering connection, interrelationships. They should not only focus on carrying out one's own tasks, but also thinking outside the box and engaging in cross-cutting activities.

Enable procedures in hierarchies: During the BRIDGE project, we observed that flatter hierarchies might make it easier to work in diverse work groups and to facilitate cooperation between different generations. When organisations ensure that both less experienced and more experienced staff are represented in work contexts, dialogue between generations can be facilitated, and the mutual respect increases. Stronger hierarchies may sometimes prevent staff to learn from each other (especially the learning of experienced professionals from junior ones), while flatter hierarchies can promote more exchange, openness, and can lead to a stronger identification with the organisation. It often depends on the type of organisations and leaders if/when junior professionals' ideas are welcome. This can be also possible in organisations with a stronger hierarchy if the team and the team leader is welcome to fresh ideas and can find ways to integrate them in the work routine.

Creating incentives: For social organisations it is not often possible to provide the employees with extra paid benefit for accomplishments at work. Incentives can then be in the form of non-monetary benefits. These lead to opportunities to appreciate the work of employees and/or colleagues by saying "thank you" and rewarding their commitment. This is a way to retain staff, to create a bond with the organisation which can also be a competitive advantage. The following are some suggestions for incentives: a (full) paid ticket for public transport in the area of work; a discount for sport activities like the gym; further learning/training offers; team building events; occasional invitations to lunches/dinners; the possibility to extend business travels for limited days for private purposes; a day off on birthdays; good working equipment (laptop, tablet, mobile phone etc.).

Structure onboarding procedures

A structured onboarding procedure allows **to set standards for the onboarding of new employees** and **for their integration in the new workplace**. In this sense, onboarding should be considered more than handing over the keys, technical equipment, email and passwords. Rather, onboarding is a process of making new employees comfortable at the workplace and getting them informed about the organisation and their tasks for them **to start their work independently with confidence**.

In the context of onboardings there should be **planful guidelines** on how new employees l**earn all necessary information** and how experienced staff **shares their experience**. Both new employees and supervisors should easily be able to get an overview of **which elements the onboarding should contain** and **who is responsible for each part**. Even if it is for a shorter period, trainings for interns should also be structured.

Ensure continuous personnel management: Besides structured onboarding processes **continuous personnel management** is needed and should be part of the overall quality management. This means to have **regular staff appraisals** (minimum once a year) to give feedback to employees on their work as well as to gather feedback on the tasks and organisations. Employees want an environment in which they can grow, and employers do not want to lose their experienced employees to another organisation. If an organisation provides **'stay-in interviews'**, there will be a win-win situation for both. This form of conversation with a supervisor helps organisations to understand the situation of staff on their **engagement, motivation, and plans** for their work. Organisations should dedicate time to reflect on the following questions: What would make the job (more) satisfying for the staff? What might tempt them to leave the organisation? The intention should be to improve the organisation, the daily work and to gather suggestions on how to **improve working conditions for all**.

Implement new quality standards for intergenerational dialogue

In order to address the intergenerational dialogue properly in organisations, extensive changes might be necessary. This starts with a quality management that promotes exchanges in both directions: top-down and bottom-up. **Guidelines, action plans** and **trainings** for improving intergenerational dialogue can offer a clear overview on standards and resources for intergenerational cooperation. Through these tools organisations should clearly define and communicate their expectations of senior and junior professionals.

There is a need to focus on intergenerational issues by acknowledging that the generational issue is a transversal or cross-cutting issue such as diversity. For this reason, trainings should be organised with professionals to be open for dialogue with other generations and to foster the promotion of knowledge transfer between them.

Organisations should promote the **acceptance of diverse methods that different generations bring** through **awareness, analysis** and **selection** of different efficient work approaches. This can happen in the context of intergenerational teams and/or when different generations work together on projects, participate in trainings or teambuilding events. **Shared experiences** can then lead to an exchange of knowledge between generations.

Providing opportunities for **informal exchange** of ideas and suggestions among staff can lead to effective learning outcomes and the acquisition of soft skills, especially in relation to behavioural aspects.

This type of exchange can happen during coffee breaks or in a common room, and it should be valued and made possible by the organisations.

Organisations should **adapt their workflows** due to higher turnover of the workforce and other ways of working. The work procedures are mostly developed by seniors, i.e., from their experience, point of view and ways of working with little change over time. However, the reality of today's job market is constantly changing, and it is not as static as before. Organisations should find innovative ways to adapt their working methods to these changes. A safe space for discussion is crucial for a healthy work environment where both employers and employees have high work satisfaction. This can be done through sharing knowledge, using platforms for documentation and building knowledge data.

In this context, cross exchanges with other organisations on the topic of intergenerational dialogue can be very beneficial to learn from each other and exchange good practices. These exchanges with professionals from other social work organisations can focus on intergenerational misunderstandings and how to solve it. If an organisation is involved in different networks (in local work groups, and/or on the national or international levels), sharing of experiences and best practices in these platforms can be a possibility to enrich and multiply the methods in one's own organisation, and this can lead to magnetic effects.

Offer quality and fair internships

In today's job market, internships are often the first entry point where young graduates gain practical experience. These opportunities give young professionals the possibility to experiment themselves in organisations with the support of their supervisors, mostly senior colleagues.

Offering **internships** for young people and students should be encouraged by organisations. However, sometimes even internships require students and young graduates to have some working experience while offering no payment or not enough to sustain their lives. This widespread practice creates unfair work conditions and deepens the existing social divide.

For this reason, **the incoming training of interns should be structured** in their duration and in the format to be followed. Quality standards for internships are necessary with a concrete plan including learning outcomes, the responsible supervisor, work routine and tasks. In these standards, feedback rounds should be included by scheduling at least one appraisal meeting in the middle of the internship period.

In order for internships to not be considered as cheap labour, the offers should be in a high-quality providing interns with on-the-job training and guidance. By doing so, organisations benefit from attracting and having more motivated and productive interns who produce quality work in return.

On- and offboarding of the interns should be structured and provide a series of milestones not limited to a simple handover. Depending on the size of the organisation, it is always important that all staff know about the new figures in the workforce, even if for short periods.

Structure offboarding procedures

With the retirement of the baby boomer generation, a wide range of knowledge and experience is leaving the workforce and the organisations. These knowledge, experience and competencies can be retained within an organisation by using methods to systematically and structurally manage and transfer them to other colleagues. Not only in the case of retirements but whenever a (well-experienced) staff member leaves an organisation, a structured offboarding is necessary. Offboarding **involves the process of separation of an employee from an organisation through resignation, termination or retirement.**

Tacit knowledge can largely be transferred through interaction, but the difficulty is to identify which tacit knowledge to be kept in the organisations. Future skills development takes place in teams. When an individual gets a chance to develop skills together with colleagues, the relationship deepens and the feeling of belonging and the conditions for the transfer of competence, especially tacit knowledge, improve.

In today's job market employees change their jobs more often than before, even after many years of service to achieve a better condition, work-life balance or to have new responsibilities and challenges for personal and career development. Depending on the experience of the employee, the leaving staff should take enough time to be a mentor with respect to the junior colleagues and ideally should be involved in the reception of new recruits. Organisations should have a **strategy and checklist** for offboarding processes that ensures the structured handover of knowledge and tasks. A successful structured **offboarding** process does not merely focus on the person leaving but takes the needs of the remaining colleagues into account. In the context of retirement, a smooth offboarding can create further collaboration opportunities for those who are retiring (e.g., coming back for guiding new colleagues in the organisation or in their tasks for only a few hours a week/several times a month…).

Care about staff's mental health and wellbeing

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, people's emotional well-being and mental health have been impacted negatively, and this is also a cross-generational issue. Youth and social workers faced new challenges in their daily work. On one hand, professionals were increasingly confronted with the mental health and psychological problems of their target groups. On the other hand, professionals themselves faced a very high workload to deal with the various changes of restrictions, uncertainties about the fundings, fear of losing their jobs, and experiencing COVID-19 pandemic themselves and in their surroundings.

Since the start of the pandemic, the social sector has been facing an increase in demand for services such as crisis response and the necessary mental health support. Following these recent developments, organisations should work towards improving the workplace, establishing **appropriate support structures** and a **work culture to care about the** mental health and wellbeing of their employees and to prevent burnouts.

Key elements of prevention can be creating a work culture that avoids over workload, creating jobs that are sustainable, a work environment in which young colleagues can grow without being overwhelmed, and leaders/seniors acting as role models while managing stress. When leaders/seniors manage their own stress burdens efficiently, they can support the organisation and also junior colleagues.

A good work culture is a task for all team members and in creating it together, it should be possible that each team member brings in their own ideas and methods. To support stress resilience and prevent burnout, social work organisations need a climate of willingness, openness and possibilities to exchange different methods and anti-stress activities in a cross-generational way.

With different experiences of coping with tasks, the trustful delegation of tasks to junior colleagues and the acceptance of new ways of working (e.g., through new and innovative methods), different generations can build a good working atmosphere together and benefit from it.

3. Level of Policymakers[3]

As stated in the **European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR)**, Principle 1: "everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market" (European Commission, 2018)[4]. One way to realise this principle is to build a bridge between generations to achieve a better communication and cooperation and a successful transfer of knowledge and experience.

Raise awareness on the importance of intergenerational dialogue

There is a lack of general awareness that living and working together of different generations is part of everyday life, and that mutual recognition and the willingness to learn from each other is necessary. Policymakers should raise awareness on the importance of multigenerational workplaces and intergenerational dialogue. They should recognise the value of knowledge and skills transfer between generations in the workplace and reach out to general public with more information on the subject. The knowledge and skills transfer should be considered both ways and mobilise the potential of younger and older persons alike.

By pointing out the reasons **why intergenerational dialogue needs to be deepened and become more widespread**, policymakers can influence organisations and the general population. Throughout the BRIDGE project, we identified several drivers of the need for multigenerational workplaces and improved intergenerational dialogue. These include:
- demographic change;
- skills shortages, surpluses and mismatch;
- EU-wide digitalisation efforts;
- green transition.

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[3] The recommendations in this section are mostly directed to policymakers at the EU level which can in return have an impact at the local, national and regional levels.

[4] European Commission (2018). *European pillar of social rights*, Available online: https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2792/95934, accessed on 2 May 2023.

A further effective strategy to raise awareness can be focusing on the **benefits of improving intergenerational dialogue** at the workplace. As mentioned throughout the policy brief, some important benefits of improving intergenerational dialogue are:

- promoting social cohesion;
- creating a more inclusive and non-discriminatory work environment;
- enhancing learning and skill sharing across all age groups;
- increasing productivity of all workers;
- improving workers' satisfaction and motivation at the workplace.

In this context, the most **crucial target groups** for policymakers are **employers, organisations and companies**. They are the most influential and powerful actors when it comes to creating inclusive work environments for intergenerational dialogue, and they can further draw their employees' attention to the topic and raise awareness among them.

Combat the shortage of skilled workers in youth and social work sector

Policymakers should have **a clear action plan for combating the shortage of skilled workers and ensure its high position on the political agenda**. It is an important issue that affects almost all sectors in the labour market, especially the social work sector in many European countries. Based on the latest OECD data, **skill shortages are particularly prevalent for training and education skills** (OECD, 2022)[5]. Additionally, these shortages have continued to increase for the past eight years, indicating a structural problem of under-supply. Considering that education and training skills are among the most important skills for youth and social work, there is a lack of skilled and qualified young professionals in the sector.

From the point of view of social organisations, there is a need to **invest more in young professionals' integration into the labour market** considering that the youth unemployment rate was 14.5% in the EU in February 2023 (Eurostat, 2023)[6]. Improving intergenerational dialogue is only possible when there are multigenerational workplaces with employees representing diverse age cohorts. Furthermore, the younger generation has a unique value in the youth and social work sector as they are closer to the target group in terms of their age and perspectives.

Our recommendation is to **attract young professionals to apply for jobs in youth and social work sector** and to motivate them to stay by **raising the status of the profession** such as with attractive and appropriate salaries, better working conditions and social benefits. These improvements can motivate potential social workers and educators to choose this career path. This recommendation contributes to the 1st Principle of the EPSR by promoting that knowledge and skills are retained and can be developed to give a better support to young women and men in social exclusion. It can help reduce staff turnover rates so that knowledge remains and can be transferred between junior and senior staff.

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[5] OECD (2022), *Skills for Jobs 2022*, Available online: https://www.oecdskillsforjobsdatabase.org/data/S4J2022_results.pdf, accessed on 2 May 2023.

[6] Eurostat (2023), *Unemployment statistics,* Available online: https://bit.ly/2CUzvr4, accessed on 2 May 2023.

This, in turn, can lead to an increased continuity for the target group of young people, when it comes to support and guidance.

| 📢 | Promote the value of youth and social work organisations |

We recommend **raising the value of youth and social work** and the essential role it has in supporting young people and professionals in a wide variety of settings by coaching, mentoring, building their self-esteem and self-confidence. Social work is an important tool to promote the inclusion of diverse disadvantaged groups in society stemming from intersectionality.

The funding authorities should **support innovative projects more on the topic of intergenerational issues** to deal with it in the social economy. Generational issues have an impact on social, societal and professional life. In youth and social work, however, organisations often have few financial resources to deal with this issue. This makes it even more difficult to find ways at the organisational level, to design new methods and to get inspired. **More financial support** would allow organisations to develop better and sustainable concepts that could bring a win-win situation for all stakeholders and to promote appreciation of all generations in the workforce and social cohesion.

The value of cooperation in teams should be recognised both financially and immaterial. Enhanced team spirit and cooperation can improve the work's quality and will boost the motivation. For this reason, **resources to build effective teams are crucial**. Organisations and policymakers need to complement their respective efforts in order to improve the working conditions which inevitably influence workers' learning, productivity and solidarity.

| 🤲 | Provide more and better benefits for older generation and seniors |

"Rapid population ageing requires a continuous and comprehensive policy response to ensure that the benefits of longer and healthier lives are fully realised, while delivering continued improvements in living standards" (OECD, 2019)[7]. To address the challenges of ageing policymakers should provide employees with **better incentives and choices to work at an older age**. With better policies, population ageing can go together with longer and more fulfilling lives, whereby working at an older age in good quality jobs is promoted and valued.

To match the skills with evolving job requirements in the labour market, employees need to improve and update their knowledge and skills set continuously – not only technical skills, but also soft skills, such as communication with other generations, teamwork and problem-solving. To this end, policymakers should **improve access to lifelong learning** and provide **recognition of skills** acquired throughout the work lifespan.

Policymakers should establish **transition structures before and after the retirement**. Just as the onboarding processes, the offboarding processes should be accompanied. **More possibilities should be opened up for senior citizens** who are no longer in employment to maintain their position in the labour market and society. This is not only beneficial for senior workers and retirees but also for organisations and junior professionals to utilise seniors' knowledge and experience when needed. Given the lack of skilled workers, knowledge and experience of senior workers are of a great value, even in reduced roles.

In this regard, policymakers should support both organisations and staff by promoting flexible or partial retirement schemes. These schemes can ease the transition between full-time employment and full retirement, and extend the working lives of senior workers (Eurofund, 2016)[8].

C) Conclusion

With the framework concept, handbook and recommendations produced in the framework of the BRIDGE project and gathered together in this publication, we aimed at:

- **raising awareness on the need for improving intergenerational dialogue at the workplace;**
- **identifying potentials of senior and junior staff,**
- **providing methods of knowledge transfer and management;**
- **presenting recommendation to staff, organisations and policymakers.**

The European Commission has proclaimed 2023 **European Year of Skills** which is a reassertion of the relevance and importance of the BRIDGE project. The European Year of Skills aims to "give a fresh impetus to lifelong learning, empowering people and companies to contribute to the green and digital transitions, supporting innovation and competitiveness"[9]. In the framework of this initiative and in other possible occasions, we will continue to promote the BRIDGE project and its' outputs.

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[7] OECD (2019), *Working Better with Age*, Available online: https://bit.ly/3Hu0V8q, accessed on 2 May 2023.

[8] Eurofund (2016), *Extending working lives through flexible retirement schemes: Partial retirement*, Available online: https://bit.ly/3Bt2srq, accessed on 2 May 2023.

[9] European Commission (n.d.), *European Year of Skills 2023*, Available online: https://bit.ly/3NrB7wF, accessed on 2 May 2023.

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