



NEWSLETTER

In this issue

- An inclusive workplace
- Workers day
- What's New?

An inclusive workplace

On the 1st of May we celebrated workers day. But what did we really celebrate? Was it the worker or was the worker just a prop? When celebrating the worker, what stereotype of worker are we celebrating?

An often-forgotten segment of the workforce is the older generation. Those above the age of 40 often labelled as over-qualified, too risky to employ or inflexible to change. Labels that justify age-based discrimination. Ageism in the workplace is one of the least-discussed types of discrimination in society.

A recent LinkedIn post by a young entrepreneur explaining why he hired a 55-year-old, earned over 70,000 likes and 5,000 comments, with many sharing their experience of being discriminated against because of their age, in spite of their experience. A 2023 [Eurobarometer report on discrimination](#) in the EU noted that 45% of respondents highlighted age as a discriminatory factor and further when it comes to age disadvantage in employment it was reported at 52%.

It is incomprehensible that a business would reject older candidates purely on a basis of age. No business would readily ignore a competitive advantage. What could be more of an advantage than the luxury to employ someone with 30 years of experience, know-how and perspective? Age discrimination in the work-

place is concerning considering that western populations are ageing, with less births per capita – Eurostat data has shown that the share of people in employment aged 55 and over between 2004 and 2019 increased from 12% to 20%. While this can be attributed to better economic conditions it also highlights a reality that we are living a healthier longer life and therefore there is a trend to stay in work for longer.

The ugly face of ageism

Ageism in the workplace does not manifest itself just as an outright hire rejection. Many older members in various industries reportedly are offered less opportunities in terms of training, thus denting job growth prospects. In addition, older members are often excluded from various company events including team-building events especially when these events are viewed as projecting an outside image.

Ageism in the workplace harms morale across the board. Getting older becomes like a ticking timebomb. Instead of feeling a sense of accomplishment at work, instead of feeling part of the growth of the business, older people are made to feel like a weight. Often only after an older employee has been made redundant does an employer realize they are hard to replace. So not only does a business lose knowledge, but it also loses on loyalty.

Why is ageism prevalent?

Various studies on the subject such as the EUs [age platform](#) go in depth into this problem, however one can readily identify causes based on unfounded assumptions such as 'anyone over the age of 50 is hard to manage, resists change, is not technology savvy, is unable to innovate'. Further there is a fear that the older generation will disadvantage the younger generation from entering the workforce. Often the hiring process is peppered with phrases like 'we are looking for energetic, fresh and agile' thinking people – which meaningless criteria is aimed at discouraging older people.

We need to fight ageism in the workplace. The Eurobarometer 2023 report 'End age discrimination in employment' argues that when the employment rate of the older generation is high, so is that of the younger generation. Co-operation between generations benefits business and the labour market by bringing in different perspectives, talent, and knowledge propagation. This argument is supported by an OECD report on promoting an age inclusive workforce (2020) which states that "building multi-generational workforces could raise GDP per capita by 19% over the next three decades".

A movement for change

We are living a good quality active life for longer, so why sideline perfectly healthy, capable individuals that have so much to offer, why discriminate?

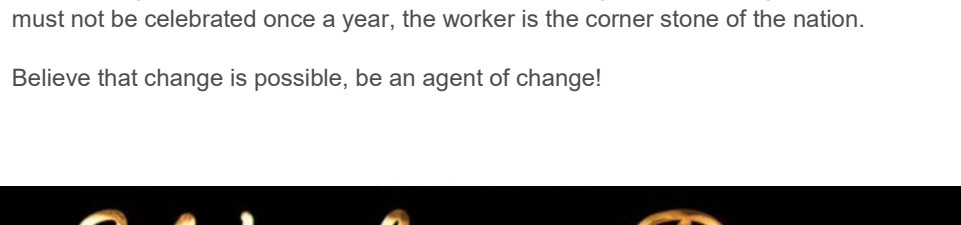
Businesses must be self-aware of the kind of optics they project in their hiring process. It is hard for an over 50 not to feel excluded if a company's website is full of 20-year-olds playing video games. Optics must be age inclusive. Businesses must also go the extra mile to cater for costlier health and related benefits. A loyal, knowledgeable worker pays back this additional cost in what they bring with them to the company.

However, businesses cannot succeed in this alone. Governments must step in to adapt legislation and enact new laws that recognise age-based discrimination for what it is – 'discrimination' that undervalues the individual. Governments must ensure that laws actively make it easier for people to stay in work. Such laws must be neutral measures in support of older workers such as the Swedish 'first in, last out' principle which encourages retention of the most experienced workers. Recently a government official, dared mention that our pension system depends on a steady flow of workers to keep on functioning, so why not in part address this problem by making it easier for people to keep on working if they wish to?

This topic needs serious consideration at the national and European level. All EU member states have legislation to protect against age-based discrimination, which laws mostly transpose the EU '[employment equality directive](#)' (2000/78/EC). However, age discrimination throughout the EU remains a problem. As an example, the Eurobarometer 2023 report on ending age discrimination highlights that in some EU countries compulsory retirement at a certain age still applies.

We expect all entities across the political spectrum to come together to seriously address this challenge and be the drivers of much needed change to address agism. The worker must not be celebrated once a year, the worker is the corner stone of the nation.

Believe that change is possible, be an agent of change!



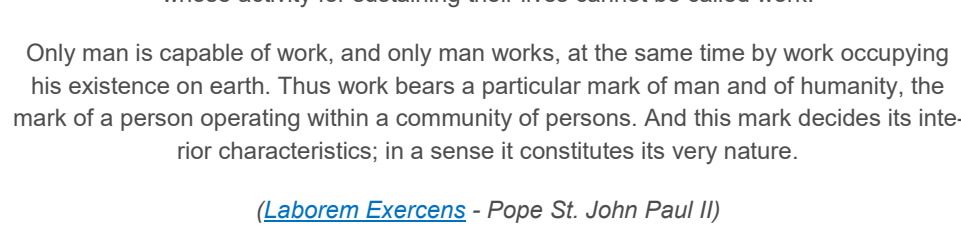
THROUGH WORK man must earn his daily bread and contribute to the continual advance of science and technology and, above all, to elevating unceasingly the cultural and moral level of the society within which he lives in community with those who belong to the same family.

And work means any activity by man, whether manual or intellectual, whatever its nature or circumstances; it means any human activity that can and must be recognized as work, in the midst of all the many activities of which man is capable and to which he is predisposed by his very nature, by virtue of humanity itself.

Man is made to be in the visible universe an image and likeness of God himself, and he is placed in it in order to subdue the earth. From the beginning therefore he is called to work. Work is one of the characteristics that distinguish man from the rest of creatures, whose activity for sustaining their lives cannot be called work.

Only man is capable of work, and only man works, at the same time by work occupying his existence on earth. Thus work bears a particular mark of man and of humanity, the mark of a person operating within a community of persons. And this mark decides its interior characteristics; in a sense it constitutes its very nature.

(Laborem Exercens - Pope St. John Paul II)







Agenzija Żgħażaġh seminar

On the 27th of April ŻHN attended the Agenzija Żgħażaġh seminar themed '[ASKing Youth Organisations](#)'. It was a great opportunity to meet up with like minded organisations whose mission is to ensure that our youth are involved in every facet of life, and are supported to grow into our nation's leaders through their work and lives. During the seminar the agency shared with us an invaluable framework to help organisations assess their quality grade and growth potential.

ŻHN Website

Our movement has an online presence at www.zhnmalta.org. Here you will find all our publications and more information about the movement.

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