

## Silver Economy and the Labour Market: Lessons from Latvia

Silver Up | Vas County Government | March 2026

Vas County, located in western Hungary, is one of the partners in Silver Up, an Interreg Europe project dedicated to strengthening the silver economy and improving how regions respond to ageing populations. In mid-March 2026, our team travelled to Riga, Latvia, to take part in an interregional study visit hosted by the Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. It was two days of concrete learning, honest dialogue, and practical inspiration.



### Why Latvia, and why now?

Vas County faces challenges that will be familiar to many European regions: a shrinking and ageing workforce, fewer young people entering the local labour market, and growing pressure on public services. These are not abstract statistics — they shape the daily decisions of our businesses, municipalities, and social services. The Silver Up project gives us a structured opportunity to look beyond our borders and learn from regions that have already begun translating this challenge into opportunity.

### What we saw and heard

The first day brought together a diverse group of Latvian speakers — from national ministries to NGOs to major employers — each presenting a different piece of the silver economy puzzle. The Ministry of Welfare introduced the 'School for Seniors' pilot, a government-backed re-skilling initiative already showing scalable results. The Public Benefit Association from Jēkabpils shared how a local silver economy ecosystem can be built step by step, starting from real community needs rather than top-down mandates.

Latvijas Pasts, the national postal service, presented its HR strategy for retaining and supporting older workers — a model refreshingly grounded in business reality, not just social responsibility rhetoric.

On the second day, we visited RIMI, a major retail chain, to see how a private sector employer integrates senior employees in practice — navigating the everyday challenges of scheduling, adaptation, and recognition. The visit rounded off a picture we had been building throughout the programme: the silver economy is not a niche policy area. It is a cross-cutting economic reality that requires government, business, and civil society to act together.

### **What we are taking home**

Several lessons stood out clearly. First, cross-sector collaboration is not optional — it is the foundation. The most effective programmes we encountered worked precisely because municipalities, NGOs, and employers were at the same table. Second, local ecosystems can be built incrementally. The Jēkabpils model showed that you do not need a grand strategy to begin; you need a clear community need and committed local actors. Third, re-skilling and active participation are not costs — they are investments. The 'School for Seniors' demonstrates that targeted support for older workers pays off in engagement, productivity, and social cohesion.

### **Next steps for Vas County**

We return to Vas County with a clearer sense of what is possible and with concrete models worth adapting. In the coming months, we will work to engage local employers and civil society organisations around the insights from Latvia. Our goal is not to copy what works elsewhere, but to identify what can be meaningfully piloted in our own context — and to use the remaining phases of Silver Up to turn those ideas into policy recommendations and practical actions for our region.