To support employment of experienced workers, the report submitted to the government today advocates raising the issue’s profile and boosting awareness in society, adopting a pragmatic and ambitious global vision, and implementing a number of practical and effective proposals.

Sophie Bellon, Chairwoman of Sodexo’s Board of Directors, Olivier Mériaux, a Plein Sens consultant and former deputy chief executive of ANACT (French labor conditions improvement agency) and Jean-Manuel Soussan, Bouygues Construction Chief Human Resources Officer, this morning submitted their report, which seeks to promote and facilitate employment of experienced employees in the private sector. On September 23, 2019 French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe charged them with finding solutions to the challenge of keeping ageing workers gainfully employed. This issue requires urgent attention given that the employment rate of older employees in France is lower than the European average, while the average age of retirement continues to rise and life expectancy continues to increase. This challenge needs to be addressed in view of a lack of skilled workers in various sectors of the economy.

Sophie Bellon, Olivier Mériaux and Jean-Manuel Soussan conducted 70-plus interviews with trade unions, small and large company representatives and experts in HR, social security, labor, employment and training, and drew up a detailed diagnostic of longstanding French employees resulting in 5 overarching conclusions:

- **Both an individual and collective cultural revolution** is necessary to sustainably improve experienced workers’ employment.
- To fulfill the promise of its social model, the French economy must embrace experienced workers.
- **The legal, financial and social framework needs to be more consistent** so that employees remain employed under good conditions. Strong political will must be shown to address the issue of ageing at work over the long term, via an overview of labor, employment, training, unemployment insurance and pension schemes.
- **The issue of senior employment goes beyond the pension reform.** Indeed, the current situation evolved over a very long period, running counter to the country’s changes in demographics and society. A series of legal or technical steps is not enough to solve the problem.
- **Society as a whole needs to become more aware of the value of experience.** Firms can also make a big contribution by implementing progressive steps with ambitious goals and regularly reporting on their progress regarding the employment of experienced workers. This is part of their responsibility.

Backed by these convictions, Sophie Bellon, Oliver Mériaux and Jean-Manuel Soussan came up with some 40 practical recommendations grouped into five key headings:
1. **Put work-related strain and the challenges of ageing** as a core focus of the forthcoming occupational health reform, among others through improving synergies between occupational doctors, private doctors and companies.

2. **Ramp up investment in post mid-career training**, by developing a series of support schemes for individual training projects and incentives to use staff CPF funds to prepare for an active retirement (e.g. volunteerism, charitable or political work).

3. **Facilitate career evolution and job transfers**, including recommendations to boost job transfers between subsidiaries for experienced employees in large companies and to improve regional job transfer management via service platforms.

4. **Managing transitions between work and retirement** by expanding access to progressive retirement schemes and possibilities to combine work and pension, or by experimenting with the right to request a reasonable job conditions change to offer more flexibility towards the end of an employee's career.

5. **Bring about a profound change in the perceptions of age in society**, by conducting research outlining objective facts on the value of experience and its positive impact on companies’ performance, and by measuring corporate pledges and progress.

Consistent government policies underpinned by far-reaching social dialog and corporate support: the report recommends **rallying all stakeholders**, i.e. government policymakers, trade unions, companies, researchers and society at large, in order to **draw up an integrated national strategy overseen by an active aging joint ministerial taskforce**.

“At a time when the average retirement age is constantly rising in France and elsewhere, as is life expectancy, action is now urgently needed. This is the goal of our recommendations in the report. But mere legal or technical steps won’t be enough – society as a whole including business must be involved in stepping up people’s awareness of the value of work experience. That’s why the report recommends holding an "Active aging conference".

**Sophie Bellon**, Chairwoman of Sodexo’s Board of Directors

“Ageing well at work needs preparation every day and at all ages, by taking steps to enhance the quality of labor and labor conditions. Public action is needed to take business-friendly steps that bring about multi-disciplinary experts including occupational doctors, prevention engineers and career development consultants. Firms, particularly small businesses, need more support in their efforts to shape their organizations so they are effective, inclusive and address the issue of labor sustainability”.

**Olivier Mériaux**, Plein Sens consultant and former deputy chief executive of ANACT (French labor conditions improvement agency)

“It’s time that we did away with the inflexible split between work and retirement. We must adapt to increasingly diverse individual career paths nowadays by promoting more individually-tailored and
progressive transitions. Boosting access to progressive retirement schemes based on simple and standard rules will ease the way career ends are managed.”

Jean-Manuel Soussan, Bouygues Construction Chief Human Resources Officer.

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