

## **The Netherlands, the old people's home of the world!**

The population of the Netherlands is ageing. It is estimated that one quarter of the population will be over the age of 65 in 25 years' time. Approximately one in three of those will be older than 80. This means that even fewer people will be working for even more non-employed people.

In addition, technological (the robot is on the way!) and social developments are increasingly making work a thing of the past. Just consider the new methods of banking, online shopping and services such as AirBNB and Uber. In other words, the labour market is incredibly dynamic. As a company and as an employee you will need to find your way in this.

But we find it very difficult to accept that we have to spend our entire lives learning just in order to be able to continue functioning, that we 'may' continue working for an ever-increasing length of time and that everyone - both men and women - should feel responsible for building up their own pensions.

Owing to all the various kinds of pension and employer's contributions, older employees are actually far too expensive, the labour market is far from flexible and attracting talent from abroad is no easy task. In addition to all the legal restrictions, there is also too little room in our international schools and a link with our own university education system is lacking.

The government is not particularly helpful in this respect either. Taxation on labour has still not been reduced. The illness of an employee, sad as this may be, can lead to a serious financial situation for a small business and it is almost impossible to adapt your organisation to the dynamics of a fast-changing environment. And when you have finally managed to reorganise, it is almost impossible for the older ex-employees to find another job. Simply because they are too expensive...

As an entrepreneur, you always have to strike the right balance between young talent and experience: how do you deal with an "ageing" personnel file, when you actually also urgently need digital natives? At knowledge-intensive companies, such as Priva, there is a great deal of added value in specific domain knowledge, which the most experienced employees often possess. The transfer of knowledge to the following generations is therefore not only extremely important, but also intensive and valuable!

Albert Einstein, the man who in retrospect quite often appeared to be right, said that you cannot solve a problem by using the same kind of thinking you used when you created it. Perhaps it is time to take a fundamentally different look at the way in which we tax and reward labour.

At Google in America, they have already gone a long way in this direction: employees there are responsible for their own development and training and co-workers take joint decisions about promotions and pay increases. And if you want to continue to grow, you do not become a manager, but a specialist! It is then no longer purely a question of your job profile, age and salary scale, but it is all about your task and the question of your contribution to the success and therefore the continuity of the business! And if you cannot give a satisfactory response to this question, what do you do then?

I have noticed that young people are prepared to view labour relations in a new, refreshing and more flexible manner and that it is particularly the older generation who see this as a threat. The older generation, who, financially speaking, hang around the neck of the Dutch economy like a millstone, but still have the last word in this country.

If the Netherlands does not want to become the old people's home of the world and we really want to put this country on the map as a creative, circular knowledge hotspot, we still have a long way to go.

*Meiny Prins, CEO of Priva*