

For information on  
17 November 2015

## **Legislative Council Panel on Manpower**

### **Measures to promote the employment of mature persons**

#### **Purpose**

This paper briefs Members on the support measures taken by the Government to help promote the employment of mature persons.

#### **Background**

2. According to statistics\* published by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), there were 1 684 200 land-based non-institutional persons aged 50 to 64 in Hong Kong in 2014. Among them, 1 058 200 persons were in the labour force. Broken down by age group, the labour force participation rate (LFPR) of the older group was far lower than that of the younger group. LFPR of the 50 to 54 age group was 76.8% while that of those aged 55 to 59 dropped to 64.6%. LFPR of those aged 60 to 64 further declined to 40.9%. In the same year, there were a total of 626 000 economically inactive persons aged 50 to 64, including 224 900 (or 35.9%) retirees. According to the “Hong Kong Labour Force Projections” by C&SD, the overall LFPR is projected to decline steadily from 59.3% in 2014 to 48.6% in 2064. This is mainly due to the ageing trend in the community arising from the increase in the proportion of older persons (aged 65 and over) in the population aged 15 and over; and the decline in the proportion of persons of prime working age (aged 25 to 59) in the population aged 15 and over.

3. For the current and future elderly generations, with better health, higher education and less physically demanding jobs, we expect that more and more mature persons would be willing to stay longer in the labour force. C&SD’s statistics also show that LFPR of those aged 50 to 64 in the past ten years was on the upward trend, rising from 56.7% in 2004 to 62.8% in 2014. The trend is in line with the above-mentioned observations.

---

\* The statistics are compiled based on the data collected in the General Household Survey (GHS) of C&SD. GHS covers land-based non-institutional population only. Foreign domestic helpers are excluded from the statistics.

4. To meet the future challenges, the Labour and Welfare Bureau and the Labour Department (LD) have already adopted measures to strengthen the labour force by attracting and supporting more mature persons to join the labour market, and facilitating enterprises to build a friendly environment for mature persons so as to tap this valuable pool of human resources.

### **Employees Retraining Board's retraining for mature persons**

5. The Employees Retraining Board (ERB) provides training courses that are market-driven and employment-oriented. The service targets of ERB are eligible employees of Hong Kong aged 15 or above with educational attainment at sub-degree or below. In 2015-16, ERB offers over 700 training courses straddling 28 industries and generic skills. Mature persons may apply for these courses having regard to their career aspirations, interests and training needs.

6. ERB also provides dedicated training for mature persons, including the introduction of a full-time placement-tied course entitled "Foundation Certificate in Workplace Re-entry" in 2015-16 for persons aged 40 or above to establish their self-confidence, enhance their communication skills and improve their personal attributes so as to equip them for rejoining the job market. Moreover, ERB has commissioned a market research on the training needs of mature persons to gauge their demand for ERB courses and services as well as gather the opinions of employers on recruitment of mature persons. ERB will develop training and support services that match the needs of mature persons based on the findings of the market research. Mature persons will continue to be included as one of ERB's key service targets. Suitable training courses and employment services will be developed for them by ERB in consultation with stakeholders.

### **Enhanced Employment support for mature persons**

7. LD provides a comprehensive range of employment services free of charge to job seekers, including mature persons. Special counters are set up in all LD job centres to provide priority registration and job referral services for mature job seekers. These job centres also provide personalised employment advisory service. Mature job seekers may meet the employment advisors in the centres to obtain employment market information and job search advice.

8. The employment terms and job descriptions of vacancy orders placed by employers using the recruitment services of LD must comply with the requirements under the relevant legislation and follow relevant codes of practice against discrimination in employment. If the vacancy order contains any

discriminatory terms or restrictions on the age of job seekers, LD will not accept nor display the said vacancy order unless the terms or restrictions are genuine job requirements for the post concerned.

9. LD has implemented the following series of measures to enhance employment support for mature persons :

- regularly organising employment briefings for mature persons and experience sharing sessions for employers on employment of mature persons;
- establishing a dedicated webpage for mature persons under the “Interactive Employment Service” to provide them with employment information, such as special employment services for mature persons, dates of employment briefings, vacancies suitable for mature job seekers, details of Employment Programme for the Middle-aged (EPM). The dedicated webpage is linked with other relevant websites, including ERB and Social Welfare Department, to facilitate mature persons in obtaining information on retraining courses, volunteer works, etc.;
- enhancing the functions of the vacancy search terminals (e.g. the image size of the new touch-screen interface can be adjusted easily; new search function on vacancies suitable for mature job seekers, etc.) to facilitate their access to employment information and search for vacancies; and
- strengthening liaison with non-governmental organisations serving mature persons to promote LD’s employment services and special employment projects and encouraging them to refer mature persons having employment needs to services provided by LD.

10. Moreover, LD’s job centres have been staging district-based thematic job fairs since May 2015 on part-time jobs which are welcomed by some mature persons. So far, three such job fairs have been organised and about 700 job seekers have joined these events. In addition, LD held a large-scale thematic job fair targeting middle-aged and mature job seekers in September 2015 to enhance their employment opportunities. A total of 15 employers, offering about 1 200 vacancies, participated in the event. The job fair attracted more than 2 800 job seekers. LD will continue its efforts in organising similar large-scale and district-based thematic job fairs.

11. To meet the needs of some mature persons who are more interested in part-time jobs, LD's EPM which originally covered only full-time employment, has been extended to cover part-time jobs (i.e. working 18 hours to less than 30 hours per week) since September 2015 with a view to encouraging employers to provide more suitable employment opportunities for middle-aged and mature job seekers. Employers may apply for training allowance of up to \$3,000 per month for each full-time/part-time employee engaged under EPM, for a period of three to six months depending on the nature, skill requirement and training need of individual posts. Participating employers are required to provide on-the-job training for the middle-aged or mature employees engaged and assign an experienced staff to act as mentor to help such employees adapt to the working environment and acquire the necessary job skills.

### **Promoting friendly employment practices for mature persons**

12. LD has all along been encouraging employers, having regard to the individual circumstances of their enterprises, to adopt friendly employment practices for mature persons and extend the working life of their employees so that mature persons can continue to stay in employment. Employers may also adopt more flexible modes of employment for mature persons with a view to establishing working conditions and environment suitable for attracting mature persons to continue in or return to employment.

13. As regards promotion of friendly employment practices for mature persons, LD has been continuously publicising the message through various publicity channels and a wide range of educational and promotional activities since March 2015. Employers are encouraged to adopt friendly employment practices for mature persons in the workplace. Such activities include staging territory-wide roving exhibitions, publishing newspaper feature articles and a series of news supplements on enterprises sharing their successful experiences in actively engaging mature persons so as to raise public awareness of the work potentials of mature persons. In August 2015 LD organised a thematic seminar on the topic during which academics and representatives of enterprises were invited to promulgate to some 250 corporate executives the merits of employing mature workers. LD will continue to draw on different media to publicise the message. Starting from early November 2015, Announcements in the Public Interest have also been broadcast through both television and radio. A thematic pamphlet will be distributed in the fourth quarter of 2015. Relevant information will also be disseminated through regular meetings and exchanges with business executives and human resources managers.

## **Conclusion**

14. The Government will continue its efforts in promoting friendly employment practices for mature persons and providing various effective and convenient employment and training support to assist mature job seekers to look for employment and employers to hire mature employees. Members are invited to note the content of this paper and give their views.

Labour and Welfare Bureau  
Labour Department  
November 2015