

# Ask the industry:

With artificial intelligence (AI)-related pension complaints appearing in Belgian Pensions Ombudsman cases for the first time, is the wider European pensions industry prepared for a surge in saver-led decisions driven by AI? And what responsibility does the industry have to intervene?

The first complaints about AI-related pension decisions filed with the Belgian Pension Ombudsman are likely a harbinger of what will emerge across Europe. In the Netherlands too, pension scheme members will increasingly base their pension choices – at least in part – on what generative AI tools tell them.

Until now, supervisors and pension providers have focused primarily on digitalisation, choice overload and the need for clear, understandable information. But the rise of generative AI adds an entirely new layer. Members are increasingly confronted with highly assertive, seemingly authoritative answers from systems that have no knowledge of their pension scheme, tax position or family circumstances.

At Aon, we see that members are rapidly becoming more digitally engaged. It is logical that generative AI will be the next step on top of these digital services. Widely published data on how many members are already actively consulting AI for pension decisions is still lacking. In practice, however, we do observe that questions are becoming more complex, that members enter conversations armed with online and AI-generated assumptions, and that managing expectations has therefore become more important than ever. This raises the bar for pension communication.

If the external environment discusses pensions extensively and sometimes carelessly, pension funds and providers must ensure that their information is the most reliable, findable and understandable source. The foundation must be 'AI-proof': clear definitions, consistent terminology, unambiguous calculation examples and well-structured Q&As. This not only helps members, but also AI systems that train on public information or base their answers on it.

FRANK DRIESSEN  
Aon Netherlands director of wealth

The emergence of AI-related pension complaints highlights the importance of balancing innovation with accountability. AI can be a powerful tool, but it cannot replace the professional judgement of qualified financial planning professionals. Consistent with Financial Planning Standards Board's (FPSB) global standards, the focus must remain on acting in clients' best interests, with people, not algorithms, firmly at the helm of important financial decisions. The pensions industry has a responsibility to ensure human oversight, transparency and appropriate safeguards remain central to consumer protection.

EMER KIRK  
FPSB Ireland CEO



**F**or the first time, the Belgian Ombudsman for pensions has reported complaints involving artificial intelligence and warned citizens not to rely on AI chatbots for complex pension information. This reveals a broader reality: pension providers are no longer the first source of information for many members. AI has become a new intermediary between pension providers and their members.

Pension institutions are subject to extensive information requirements and have invested heavily in member communication. Historically, pension funds communicated directly with participants. Today, information increasingly passes through an algorithm before reaching the individual, as instead of contacting their pension provider, many members are asking ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot or other AI tools.

The Belgian experience suggests that caution is warranted. According to the Ombudsman, pension institutions were in most cases providing the correct information, while AI-generated responses had introduced confusion or inaccuracies. This reflects a fundamental challenge. General-purpose AI systems are designed to generate plausible responses based on patterns in data. They are not pension specialists. They may misunderstand scheme rules, confuse national pension systems, rely on outdated information or present uncertain conclusions with unwarranted confidence.

The challenge is not merely that AI may occasionally provide incorrect information. It is that many members increasingly trust AI as their first source of information. Pension funds therefore face competition not only from misinformation but also from a new digital intermediary. However, AI is here to stay and the solution is not to discourage its use. Members will continue to use AI because it is convenient, available around the clock and capable of providing immediate responses. The question is how pension providers should respond.

The first responsibility of the industry is to ensure that trustworthy pension information is easier to access than inaccurate information. Pension funds cannot control what external AI systems say, but they can improve the quality, accessibility and clarity of their own communications. Information that is clear, consistent and written in plain language is more likely to be correctly interpreted both by members and by AI systems.

This is where organisations such as Quietroom in the UK have demonstrated valuable leadership. Their work has highlighted that pension communications must increasingly be designed not only for human readers but also for AI-driven search and information tools.

**MATTI LEPPÄLÄ**

**PensionsEurope secretary general**

**F**rom a UK perspective, Belgium should be seen as an early warning sign, not an outlier. The UK is already seeing similar trends emerge in employment grievances and Financial Ombudsman complaints. Positively, AI is lowering the barrier for people to frame grievances and complaints, and access these systems. But negatively it can also produce long, overconfident and inaccurate submissions. In financial services, the Financial Ombudsman Service has reported a rise in AI assisted complaints, including examples containing fabricated law and misquoted rules, which can slow resolution rather than improve it.

However, the right response is not to block AI generated complaints altogether. Where the industry does need to intervene is in process, not prohibition. Potentially by tightening the information required to make a complaint while in parallel with reminding complainants to treat AI outputs as non-authoritative.

**IAN D’COSTA**

**Arc Pensions Law legal director**