

(eng)aging!

(ne)stárneme!

2023 *(eng)aging!* Conference & Technology fair

Press Release

June 21, 2023, Prague

The sixth edition of the international conference on population aging called eng(aging)! took place in Prague and was streamed online on June 19-20, 2023. The event was attended by many world-renowned experts including the Deputy Director of the International Institute on Aging at the United Nations-Malta, Rosette Farrugia-Bonello; the founder and president of On-Medio and SilverEco.org, Jérôme Pigniez; Director of the Centre for research into the older workforce and lecturer at the University of Leicester School of Business, Professor Matt Flynn; and Michal Halperin Ben Zvi, an expert on the usability, engagement, and adoption of digital products and services by older adults.

The 2023 edition of the Conference discussed two topics: the potential of the silver economy to benefit all generations; and how to build capacity to manage crises and their impact on older persons' lives. In the context of the continuing demographic transition of our population towards aging, it was important to develop political, social, and technological innovations that supported older persons in pursuing healthy and active aging and in being involved as agents of positive change in all areas of societal life.

During the conference, key insights from prominent figures in the field of healthy aging and the silver economy were shared. The speakers captured the core ideas surrounding aging, the silver economy, and the importance of an inclusive perspective. "Healthy aging should be viewed as an investment with benefits and returns," emphasized Rosette Farrugia-Bonello. Jérôme Pigniez stressed the pervasive impact of aging on products and services, stating, "No product or service can avoid being suitable for the elderly. The aging factor affects everything." Pigniez advocated for an intergenerational perspective to prevent conflicts, stating, "We must counter things like #okboomer. To avoid generational strife, we must prioritize an intergenerational mindset." Recognizing the diverse nature of the senior demographic, Pigniez further noted, "Seniors encompass a remarkably diverse group. A single solution cannot apply to all; it's a magic notion if everyone were alike." Summing up the essence of the silver economy, Pigniez concluded, "The concept of the silver economy isn't about pessimism; it's about seizing opportunities."

Special panels featuring the participation of experts from the Visegrad countries (V4), Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, and Germany were dedicated to exploring the potential of the silver economy for all generations and discussing preparedness strategies for managing crises and their impact on the lives of older individuals.

Experts highlighted crucial challenges in supporting older people during crises. Iryna Kurylo stressed "urgent needs for medicines, food delivery, and elderly transport." This highlighted immediate requirements during crises. Dr. Vidovicova underscored the role of "emergency agents" for the aged, often unprepared due to lacking training. This emphasized the need for

training in elderly crisis care. Dr. Zapedowska-Kling addressed food insecurity, noting "budget constraints, knowledge gaps, geriatric care limitations, and affordability" as key factors. This revealed multifaceted challenges faced by the elderly.

Scholars also illuminated crucial aspects of digital inclusion and aging and emphasized the critical nature of addressing digital inclusion for older adults. Dr. Drabowicz noted that "Older age is the biggest predictor of drop in digital skills," signalling a concerning decline in digital proficiency with age. The shift to digital services was emphasized by the observation that "Access to digital services has become digitalized. Those excluded risk becoming second-class citizens," underlining the potential consequences of digital exclusion for older individuals. Marek Hasa proposed a forward-looking approach: "Connecting generations through digital media co-creation can tackle loneliness as a by-product." This approach emphasized the dual benefits of digital engagement. "Volunteering-driven, cross-generational digital literacy transfer projects" were highlighted as solutions to bridge digital gaps. Collaboration and shared knowledge were underscored as tools for fostering inclusivity.

In the context of economic implications of aging, experts provided insightful perspectives. "Age is a pivotal factor influencing people's economic behaviour," emphasized Olga Gagauz. This underlined how age shapes financial decisions and actions. Gagauz further pointed out that "Intergenerational redistribution in an aging society necessitates careful evaluation of social, economic, and fiscal consequences." This highlighted the complexities of balancing resources across generations. Łukasz Jurek highlighted the impact of pension instability on retirement choices, noting, "In countries with uncertain pension systems, individuals tend to opt for earlier retirement, seeking greater certainty." This underscored how pension policies affect retirement age decisions. Claudia Vogel highlighted the economic challenges faced by low-income retirees: "The income reduction among low-income retirees has notably exacerbated their financial situation."

There was a practical workshop focusing on work ability and age management (in Czech). During the workshop, the organizers presented the sixth "Age Management Excellence Award" to a company that had exemplified an exceptional approach to age management. This award acknowledged the company's skill in managing individuals with a consideration of their age, based on the concept of work ability. The nominees for the year 2023 included Centrum Kašpar, Domov pro seniory Černá Hora & Zámek Břežany, Masarykova univerzita, and Městská část Praha 18. Ultimately, the distinguished award was conferred upon Domov pro seniory Černá Hora & Zámek Břežany for their outstanding dedication to age management.

At the Technological Fair, a diverse range of presentations offered insights into innovative solutions for the elderly. Ms. Halperin Ben Zvi highlighted the importance of understanding aging stages for inclusive design: "Learning about aging stages aids in implementing inclusive design." Dr. Szabó introduced a virtual reality game project focused on rehabilitation and memory exercises, showing potential for elderly health support. Dr. Guzsvinecz discussed aiding indoor navigation using voice commands, QR codes, and cell phone cameras, emphasizing their functional role. Dr. Kaczmarek shared the benefits of accessible games, which allowed monitoring of health and mood through gameplay sessions. Dr. Hu showcased the motivating potential of exergames for encouraging elderly exercise. Dr. Macháčová presented the platform PERMANENTO, emphasizing its role in preventing physical inactivity. Ms. Schwarze from Biozoon discussed ethical responsibility in health enhancement through texture modifiers and high-protein food products. Dr. Sik-Lanyi emphasized holistic accessibility design, including templates, alternative text, fonts, and elderly-centric approaches. Dr. Halmosi discussed the potential of chatbots in rehabilitation, while also acknowledging their limitations. Dr. Mandeel highlighted the positive impact of APH-ALARM on Aphasia patients' independence and security through pictogram use. Dr. Zhao addressed

the evolving landscape of service robots, unveiling new possibilities in the service industry. Ms. Sabo presented the "Život 90" Emergency Care project's comprehensive technological system for emergency signalling. Vítězslav Mergl introduced the Bless system for seniors living alone, employing non-disruptive household sensors for monitoring.

The conference, which took place under the auspices of Marian Jurečka, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, is co-organized by the [Active Aging Centre](#) and the [KEYNOTE company](#).

The partners of the conference were the [International Visegrad Fund](#), [Czech-German Future Fund](#), [JTI](#), and [Česká spořitelna](#).

Detailed outputs from the conference in the form of a report, photo and video gallery will be available at www.engagingprague.com.

About the project

The 6th international conference is organized in the frame of the long-term (eng)aging! The project, which focuses on fostering of society-wide debate about the accelerating demographic change and population aging. The project aims to stimulate a constructive discussion about these trends and to look for ways to make use of them for the benefit of society. The 2023 edition will be held physically and will be streamed online.