

2026 (eng)aging! Conference & Technology Fair

Press Release

May 16, 2026, Prague

The 9th International (eng)aging! Conference, organized within the framework of the (eng)aging! project, concluded on Friday in Prague after two days of discussions dedicated to one of the key societal challenges of the 21st century — how to build “Communities for All Ages” in the context of demographic change, technological transformation, and growing social inequalities. The conference welcomed more than 70 experts, researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and innovators from over 10 countries. Through keynote lectures, thematic panels, and the accompanying Technology Fair, participants explored how communities, labour markets, healthcare systems, and public policies can respond to population ageing in ways that strengthen dignity, participation, resilience, and intergenerational solidarity.

In her keynote lecture, Jolanta Perek-Białas from the Jagiellonian University and Warsaw School of Economics emphasized that participation must become a fundamental principle of age-friendly communities: “Participation is not a trend — it’s a necessity.” She highlighted the importance of local action, intergenerational cooperation, and listening to people’s diverse needs to create inclusive and sustainable communities.

Anette Scoppetta, Executive Director of the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research in Vienna, warned about the growing inequalities connected to digitalization, unstable employment, and demographic change. “We are facing multiple transitions at once — digital, social, and economic — which are increasing inequalities and exclusion,” she noted, calling for integrated and transformative policy responses rather than merely adapting existing systems.

Discussions throughout the conference repeatedly stressed that healthy and active ageing is a shared societal responsibility. Kateřina Macháčová from Faculty of Humanities at Charles University reminded participants that “we live longer, but not necessarily healthier,” emphasizing the importance of lifelong movement, education, and self-care through initiatives such as the Permanento programme.

The panel on social isolation and emotional wellbeing highlighted the growing risks of loneliness and weakening social ties. Hungarian sociologist Fruzsina Albert stressed the importance of maintaining family relationships and friendships before social isolation becomes irreversible. Zuzana Katreniaková added a broader perspective by reminding participants that “humans are not supposed to be alone” and emphasized the importance of solidarity and cooperation across generations.

Several panels focused on the future of work, digital inclusion, and artificial intelligence. Cecilia Sik Lányi discussed how AI and innovation can help reduce social exclusion while also warning against the risks of cognitive offloading and reduced critical thinking. Oliver Lohaj emphasized the importance of trust in digital participation and combating misinformation among older adults: “A trustworthy tool should not decide for users. It should help users make informed decisions.”

The debate on technology and care also raised ethical questions concerning intimacy, autonomy, and the role of social robots in ageing societies. Lucie Vidovičová pointed out that the discussion about artificial intimacy and robot-assisted care reflects broader societal questions about dignity, trust, and human relationships.

The conference also addressed pension sustainability, labour market reforms, and welfare systems in ageing societies. Besnik Fetahu highlighted the demographic and labour market pressures affecting pension systems in Kosovo, while Merita Xhumari presented ongoing reforms in Albania aimed at shifting from institutional care toward community-based services and strengthening digital skills across generations.

Davide Lucantoni from the IRCCS INRCA Centre for Socio-Economic Research on Ageing presented examples of participatory and multi-level approaches to active ageing policies in Italy, stressing the importance of involving stakeholders at local, regional, and national levels.

The accompanying Technology Fair showcased innovative digital tools, AI-supported solutions, assistive technologies, and community-oriented innovations designed to support healthy, active, and independent ageing.

Video recordings of all conference sessions will be available on the (eng)aging! YouTube channel. The organizers will also publish a conference report and policy recommendations in the coming weeks.

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

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

The full [program](#) as well as the list of [speakers](#) can be found [here](#). The working language of the conference is English.

Contact: Martin Špáta, tel. 608 153 456, spata@keynote.cz.

About the project

The 9th international conference was organized in the framework of the long-term (eng)aging! project, which focuses on fostering society-wide debate about the accelerating demographic change and population ageing. The project aims to stimulate constructive discussion about these trends and look for ways to make use of them for the benefit of society. The 2026 edition will be held both physically and streamed online.