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## 8TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON AGING & TECHNOLOGY FAIR

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## CONFERENCE REPORT

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CENTRE OF EXPERTISE  
IN LONGEVITY  
AND LONG-TERM CARE  
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# KEYNOTE LECTURES

## ASPECTS OF INTERGENERATIONAL COHESION IN THE CONTEXT OF LONGEVITY – TOWARDS A CARING SOCIETY? – KAI LEICHSENRING

**Affiliation:** European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research, Vienna

**Summary:** Framing population ageing as a societal success rather than a “tsunami,” Dr. Leichsenring called for a deliberate shift from crisis narratives to a constructive agenda centred on intergenerational fairness and a caring society. Against the backdrop of an EU initiative on intergenerational fairness, he argued that longevity compels us to redesign life course structures and welfare arrangements so that care, learning, and paid work are interwoven across the lifespan. The traditional tripartite sequence—education, work, retirement—no longer reflects lived realities; instead, societies should normalise recurring “care spells,” second and third chances for education and re-skilling, and flexible re-entry to employment.

Care work, he stressed, has long been undervalued—largely invisible, unpaid, and disproportionately borne by women. Public perceptions of fairness are declining, while younger cohorts face greater difficulty accumulating assets. These trends strengthen the case for social and technological innovation in health and long term care, moving towards integrated, participatory systems that recognise and include the informal care that occurs in everyday life. Technology can

and should assist, but cannot replace the relational essence of care; robots and automation are complements, not substitutes, for human contact.

Scaling long term care requires investment and a cultural shift: societies must acknowledge that formal care deserves proper and predictable funding, while informal carers—who currently provide the vast majority of care—need systematic support. Priorities include: credible assessment of needs at family and societal levels; rights based access to long term care ecosystems that respect preferences and dignity; age friendly environments; intergenerational mentoring; and the development of new, skilled job profiles in a sustainable care workforce. Families should be empowered with real options for organising care, supported by flexible services and fair financial arrangements.

Dr. Leichsenring concluded that ageing societies can thrive if they rebuild intergenerational cohesion by valuing care as a shared social responsibility. Drawing lessons from European peers, he urged deliberate cross-country learning and policy transfer. The ultimate goal, he argued, is a new life-course architecture that embeds care as a recognised, respected, and resourced part of social life—benefiting both those who give and those who receive support.

## UNECE PERSPECTIVES ON PROMOTING INTERGENERATIONAL COHESION THROUGH AGEING POLICIES – LISA WARTH

**Affiliation:** Head, Population Unit, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), Geneva

**Summary:** Ms. Warth situated intergenerational cohesion within the broader policy architecture that guides ageing work across the UNECE region, clarifying UNECE's mandate as one of the UN's regional commissions (56 member States across Europe, North America and Central Asia) and distinguishing it from the European Commission. Her keynote outlined how UNECE supports governments to adapt to demographic change through policy dialogue, knowledge exchange and capacity building—most notably by coordinating regional implementation, monitoring and review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) and by advancing the approach of “mainstreaming ageing.”

Mainstreaming ageing, she argued, is not a narrow social sector agenda but a whole of government lens that embeds principles of intergenerational equity and solidarity across policy domains—employment and social protection, health and long term care, housing and urban development, transport and accessibility, and data and statistics. Within this framing, age friendly environments and services are a practical vehicle for cohesion, enabling people of all ages

to participate and age in place. Policy tools highlighted included good practice guidelines, peer reviews, policy briefs and thematic dialogues that help Member States translate evidence into action and benchmark progress.

Connecting to discussions from the conference's first day, Ms. Warth emphasised three priorities. First, aligning labour market, education and lifelong learning policies with longer, more diverse life courses to sustain productivity and inclusion. Second, rebalancing health and long term care systems toward integrated, person centred models that value and support both formal and informal care. Third, addressing ageism and stereotypes—through representation, communication standards and intergenerational initiatives—to strengthen social trust and mitigate loneliness. Throughout, she underscored the importance of disaggregated, comparable data to reveal inequalities over the life course and to target responses effectively.

She closed by inviting continued collaboration with UNECE platforms and by encouraging cross country learning—adapting proven policies to local contexts—so that demographic change becomes a catalyst for fairer, more cohesive and age inclusive societies.

## OLD AGE BELONGS WITH US: DIGNITY, AUTONOMY, FELLOWSHIP, SUPPORT – RUTH ŠORMOVÁ

**Affiliation:** Director, ŽIVOT 90, z.ú., Prague

**Summary:** Ruth Šormová's keynote advanced a clear proposition: old age belongs at the centre of our communities, not their margins. She articulated four mutually reinforcing pillars for dignified ageing—dignity (rights and respect), autonomy (self determination and choice), fellowship (relationships and belonging) and support (timely, proportional assistance)—and translated them into practical service and policy directions.

Šormová called for an integrated, person centred ecosystem that connects social and health services with community programmes and civil society initiatives. A priority is the systematic recognition and support of informal caregivers through counselling, respite, training and workplace arrangements, complemented by fair financial instruments. Prevention of loneliness should be pursued through everyday opportunities for contact, befriending schemes and intergenerational activities. Equally important are accessible, community rooted services—day centres, helplines, outreach and home support—that enable people to age in place.

She emphasised co-creation with older persons—"nothing about us without us"—throughout service design and continuous, evidence informed case management that respects preferences and changing needs. Organisations such as ŽIVOT 90 can bridge volunteers, caregivers, municipalities and health providers, piloting solutions that are both humane and scalable and that complement public systems. To sustain these efforts, Šormová highlighted the need for multi-year, predictable funding; strengthened workforce competencies (especially relational skills and ethics of care); and robust local partnerships, particularly with primary and palliative care.

At the policy level, she recommended a rights based long term care framework with clear entitlements, equitable cost sharing and quality standards; universal access to information and navigation; age friendly housing and neighbourhoods; and routine measurement of outcomes that matter to older persons—such as sense of control, social connectedness and relief from burden. Concluding, Šormová urged a shift from viewing older people as passive recipients to recognising them as neighbours, mentors and citizens whose contributions actively strengthen social cohesion.

## THE DOOR TO THE DIGITAL WORLD IS OPEN – A LOOK AT FUTURE TECHNOLOGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL AGEING AND THE IMPORTANCE OF ENTERING THE DIGITAL WORLD TOGETHER – KRISTINA BARCZIK

**Affiliation:** Professor of Health Education & Health Pedagogy, University of Applied Sciences – CBS with EUFH; Chair, Gemeinsam Digital e.V.; Lead, Network "Future Technologies for Successful Ageing", Berlin

**Summary:** Professor Barczik framed digital participation as a prerequisite for equitable ageing: the door to the digital world is open, but many older adults cannot step through it unaided. Her keynote organised the challenge around three levers—people, places, and products. For people, the focus is confidence, skills and motivation. For places, it is the availability of supportive learning settings and reliable connectivity. For products, it is inclusive design that accommodates sensory, cognitive and motor diversity.

Barriers such as affordability, accessibility, perceived relevance and trust are not deficits of older adults, she argued, but solvable design and policy problems. Effective responses blend co-learning (intergenerational mentoring; trained "digital navigators"), micro learning (short, purposeful sessions tied to everyday tasks), and safe sandboxes where experimentation is risk free. Drawing on her initiatives "Together into the Digital World" (since 2017) and "Future Technologies for Successful Ageing in Rural Areas" (since 2019), she illustrated how peer tutors, pop-up labs in libraries and general practitioners' offices practices, and partnerships with municipalities and care organisations help translate

curiosity into sustained use.

Looking ahead, she mapped the technology landscape most likely to matter for ageing well: telehealth and remote monitoring; wearables for safety and chronic disease management; voice assistants and conversational AI for everyday support; extended reality (XR) for rehabilitation and engagement; and smart home sensors for unobtrusive assistance. Adoption, however, must be grounded in privacy by design, transparent data governance and informed consent, with clear red lines against manipulative design.

Barczik proposed pragmatic measures of success—retention of use over time, gains in self efficacy, reduced friction in accessing services, and improvements in social connectedness—arguing for simple, meaningful metrics that do not overburden users or staff.

Policy recommendations included device lending schemes and connectivity vouchers; accessibility and usability standards in public procurement; digital skills training for the care workforce; and interoperable digital public infrastructure that reduces duplication. She closed with a call for entering the digital world together—a cross sector coalition that ensures older adults experience agency, safety and joy in technology enabled lives.

# SPECIAL ADDRESS OF MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS, CZECHIA

## SPECIAL ADDRESS – JANA SKALKOVÁ

**Summary:** The Special Address outlined recent labour market and social policy steps undertaken in the Czech Republic: modernization of the Labour Code; labour market projections to 2030; and an emphasis on flexibility across the life course to better combine work, learning, care, and family

life. The remarks stressed bridging generational divides, strengthening preventive healthcare and social services for people in their 50s–70s, and supporting intergenerational cooperation in workplaces and communities.

# CONNECTING GENERATIONS: FAMILY DYNAMICS, DEPENDENCY AND INTEGRATED CARE

## SOCIAL EXCHANGE IN PARENT–CHILD RELATIONSHIPS OVER THE FAMILY LIFE COURSE – MERRIL SILVERSTEIN

**Summary:** Silverstein examined why adult children provided care to ageing parents by contrasting two explanations—socioemotional solidarity versus reciprocity—and tested them using the "Longitudinal Study of Generations" (1971–2021). The analysis focused on "established adulthood" investments made by parents when children were in their 30s (assessed in 1985) and linked them to care the same children later provided to mothers between 1997 and 2021. Caregiving intensity was indexed across waves using help with household chores, transportation/shopping, and assistance when sick (eight-point frequencies summed). Explanatory factors included earlier financial transfers, child-care help provided by parents, expected bequests, and modelled caregiving (what mothers did for their own parents). Parental vulnerability—IADL/ADL impairment, number of serious diseases, and "years of life left"—was treated as a moderator.

Findings showed little evidence of intergenerational continuity in caregiving via modelling: what mothers had done for their parents did not predict children's later

support for mothers. By contrast, instrumental investments (financial gifts/appliances, child-care support, and bequest expectations) were associated with higher subsequent support from adult children. Crucially, the effect was contingent: children who had received financial help were more responsive to a parent's later vulnerability (steeper care increases as need rose). The study interpreted this as contingent reciprocity—akin to an "insurance" mechanism rather than simple payback.

Silverstein noted mixed motives (reciprocity alongside closeness and proximity), and outlined limitations: U.S./California-based sample; wealth and welfare-state differences; changing family structures (stepfamilies), gender norms, and smaller sibships that could alter reciprocity dynamics. Policy implications pointed to recognising long time-horizons in family exchange and to designing supports that complemented, rather than presumed, family-based care.

## CARING FOR AGEING PARENTS: PREVALENCE AND SUPPORT NETWORKS AMONG MIDLIFE ADULTS IN GERMANY – BETTI BAYER

**Summary:** Betti Bayer's presentation examined how midlife adults in Germany cared for their ageing parents and how these responsibilities were embedded in broader networks of support. Drawing on data from the 2023 wave of the German Ageing Survey (DEAS), she demonstrated that approximately half of midlife adults with at least one parent in need of support had been actively involved in providing care. Her analysis revealed that these caregiving arrangements rarely existed in isolation: most were embedded in care networks that combined siblings, spouses, other relatives, and professional ambulatory services.

The study also showed that these networks varied considerably in size and stability. While some families organised extensive webs of reciprocal help, others relied heavily on one or two individuals, often daughters or daughters-in-law. Bayer highlighted that in many cases professional services complemented rather than substituted family care, especially in urban areas where service infrastructure was stronger.

She discussed how the prevalence of caregiving had been influenced by demographic shifts such as longer life expectancy, higher rates of singlehood, and increased

mobility. These changes had created both pressures and opportunities: more people found themselves in a position to support two generations simultaneously, but at the same time expanded services and community programmes provided options for shared responsibility.

Bayer concluded that policy makers and service providers should recognise the diversity of actor constellations

beyond the traditional nuclear family. She recommended strengthening support for shared-care arrangements, improving information systems that help families navigate available services, and ensuring that policies do not assume a single primary caregiver but acknowledge care as a collective endeavour. Her findings underscored the importance of a systemic view that values both familial solidarity and professional contributions in sustaining long-term elder care.

## WHO PROVIDES CARE WHEN FAMILY IS NOT NEARBY? LONG TERM TRENDS IN SOCIAL SUPPORT IN LATER LIFE – MAREIKE BÜNNING

**Summary:** Mareike Bünning's presentation examined long-term trends in the provision of care for older adults in Germany, focusing on situations in which close family members were not geographically available. Drawing on two decades of data from the German Ageing Survey (2002–2023), she showed how demographic shifts, declining co-residence with children, and increased regional mobility had altered the structure of later-life support networks.

Her analysis revealed that approximately one in seven older adults had lived without a partner and without children nearby, a proportion that had increased slightly over the study period. In such contexts, non-kin care played an important role: around 3–4% of adults aged 40 and over had provided care to non-relatives, and this share had remained

relatively stable over time. Women and those with higher education were more likely to have taken on these non-kin caregiving roles.

Bünning argued that these findings challenged the traditional assumption that family members would always be available to provide support in old age. Instead, a significant minority of older adults had relied on friends, neighbours, or voluntary associations. She emphasised that policies needed to recognise these “families of choice” while also strengthening state and market-based care provisions. Such recognition, she noted, should not be seen as a replacement for public responsibility, but as a complementary element in a more pluralistic care landscape.

## PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES AND THE DECLINE OF INFORMAL FAMILY CARE: THE CASE OF – MARIANA BUCIUCEANU-VRABIE

**Summary:** Mariana Buciuceanu-Vrabie's presentation addressed the dual challenge that Moldova had been facing: a rapidly ageing population combined with substantial out-migration of younger cohorts. These dynamics had placed increasing pressure on older households, particularly those headed by individuals over 75, many of whom were living alone. Family-based care, which traditionally had been the backbone of elder support, had been eroding as working-age relatives either migrated abroad or were unable to provide sustained assistance.

She showed evidence that the demand for care had risen steadily, while the availability of family caregivers had decreased. As a result, a growing number of older adults had turned to public or private services, even though coverage remained uneven and in many cases insufficient. Home-care services had often been concentrated in urban centres,

leaving rural areas underserved. Workforce shortages had also persisted, both in terms of numbers and in the professional training required for complex care.

The presentation argued that this situation underscored the urgent need for scaling up public social services. Policy recommendations included expanding community-based home care, creating stronger regional equity in service provision, and investing in the training and retention of care professionals. She also emphasised the importance of integrating health and social care functions, so that older persons received coordinated support for daily living alongside medical needs. Ultimately, she concluded that without decisive policy measures, the decline of informal family care would leave many of Moldova's older citizens increasingly vulnerable.



# CONNECTING GENERATIONS: CAREGIVING, LONELINESS, AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION

## ATTITUDE TOWARD AND CARE FOR THE OLD GENERATION (GEORGIA) – TORNIKE GAVASHELI

**Summary:** The presentation examined the cultural and social attitudes toward older generations in Georgia and the ways in which these attitudes shaped patterns of care. Drawing on national survey data, Gavasheli showed that intergenerational contact had been frequent and embedded in everyday life, supported by strong traditional norms of respect and obligation toward elders. Older adults were not only perceived as dependents but also as active contributors to family well-being, particularly through advice-giving and grandparental involvement.

The findings indicated that families had borne the main responsibility for elder care, yet expectations of shared responsibility with the state had also been present. Municipal services, public transportation, and healthcare accessibility had played an increasingly important role, especially in urban areas, where migration and changing household structures

had reduced the capacity of families to provide daily care.

Gavasheli argued that although Georgian society maintained high levels of normative solidarity with older adults, there had been a growing recognition of the need for formal support systems to complement family caregiving. The study highlighted a dual dynamic: while traditional family ties ensured respect and frequent contact, demographic change and out-migration challenged the sustainability of exclusively family-based care.

In conclusion, the presentation underscored that policy development should have built upon the existing cultural capital of intergenerational solidarity while expanding public and community services. Strengthening local health and social infrastructures was presented as essential to safeguard the dignity and well-being of the older generation in Georgia.

## INTERGENERATIONAL AND PEER ONLINE/OFFLINE SOCIAL RELATIONS OF OLDER ADULTS – MARCELA PETROVÁ KAFKOVÁ

**Summary:** Marcela Petrová Kafková presented findings on how digital inclusion intersected with the social relations of older adults. She argued that while the internet had often been promoted as a tool to reduce isolation, its actual impact was modest when compared to other factors such as health status, relationship satisfaction, and levels of loneliness.

Her research combined survey data and qualitative insights to show that internet non-users were at slightly higher risk of isolation, yet the decisive elements for well-being were the quality of offline relationships and feelings of connectedness. ICT use functioned less as a universal remedy and more as an optional resource, useful for some but not necessary for all. For many participants, digital platforms offered an additional means of contact, but they rarely substituted for meaningful face-to-face ties.

Petrová Kafková also highlighted the importance of peer relations in later life. Online connections could strengthen existing friendships and intergenerational bonds, but they were most beneficial when combined with offline interactions. She concluded that policies should not overemphasize technology as a single solution to loneliness. Instead, they should support diverse pathways to social integration, including community activities, intergenerational programmes, and accessible opportunities for both online and offline participation.

Her contribution underscored that the strongest protection against loneliness remained high-quality human relationships, with technology playing only a supplementary role.

## HOW SOCIETAL CRISES AFFECT SOCIAL INTEGRATION – GRANDCHILD CAREGIVING DURING COVID – LISA JOANNE KLASSEN

**Summary:** Lisa Joanne Klasen's presentation examined how major societal crises, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic, reshaped intergenerational caregiving and its consequences for social integration. She introduced the DIRe Crises Model (Differential Investment of Resources), which explained that during crises individuals' capacity, motivation and opportunities to maintain social ties were altered significantly. As restrictions intensified and uncertainty grew, many

families tended to "turtle up," focusing their attention and resources on the closest and most dependable relationships.

Drawing on panel data, Klasen demonstrated that grandchild caregiving did not decline as much as might have been expected. In many families, grandparents remained actively engaged, adapting their involvement to new conditions through smaller household bubbles, digital contact, or

carefully managed in-person care. The analysis showed that this caregiving role continued to provide protective benefits, especially in reducing loneliness among older adults. In fact, in some cases the emotional rewards of caregiving increased during the pandemic, as grandparents felt a stronger sense of purpose and belonging by supporting younger family members through a time of disruption.

Her findings highlighted significant variation across socio-demographic groups: women, those in closer proximity

to their grandchildren, and individuals with flexible work arrangements were more likely to sustain or even increase their caregiving contributions. Klasen concluded that intergenerational support functioned as a critical resilience factor during crises, helping to preserve emotional well-being and family cohesion. She argued that policies should recognise and facilitate such intergenerational ties, ensuring safe conditions for caregiving even in times of public health emergencies.

## THE EFFECT OF GRANDPARENTAL CARE ON LONELINESS ACROSS EUROPEAN REGIONS – MARTIN LAKOMÝ

**Summary:** Martin Lakomý's presentation examined how the provision of grandchild care related to feelings of loneliness among older adults in different European welfare regimes. Drawing on longitudinal data from the SHARE survey and applying fixed-effects models, the study traced within-individual changes over time, thereby controlling for stable personal characteristics.

The analysis showed that engaging in grandparental caregiving was generally associated with reduced loneliness, although the magnitude and nature of the effect varied by region and gender. In countries with extensive formal childcare services, grandparental involvement tended to be more voluntary and was therefore linked with stronger positive emotional outcomes. By contrast, in regions where grandparents provided care primarily out of necessity, the impact on loneliness was weaker or even negligible.

Gender differences were also observed. For grandmothers, only intensive levels of childcare were connected with lower loneliness, whereas for grandfathers, even occasional caregiving appeared to enhance social connectedness. The findings suggested that societal expectations and gendered caregiving roles shaped the psychological benefits derived from intergenerational involvement.

Overall, the presentation concluded that while grandparental care could act as a protective factor against loneliness, its benefits were context-dependent. Policymakers were encouraged to view intergenerational support not merely as a substitute for public services but as an activity that, when voluntary and supported, contributed to well-being and social cohesion in later life.

## CONNECTING GENERATIONS: MAIN TAKEAWAYS

The two sessions explored how intergenerational relationships shape caregiving, social integration, and resilience across families and communities.

- 1. Value Intergenerational Caregiving:** Grandparental care and family support plays a crucial role in reducing loneliness and strengthening bonds, particularly during crises such as COVID-19.
- 2. Address Social Integration Across Generations:** Studies show that both online and offline intergenerational interactions improve emotional well-being and help counter isolation.
- 3. Mitigate Strain on Families:** Rising dependency ratios place new pressures on families; integrated care models were recommended to share responsibility between households, communities, and institutions.
- 4. Promote Intergenerational Equity:** Policies should ensure that younger and older generations benefit fairly from support systems, avoiding over-burdening one group.
- 5. Support Inclusive Community Spaces:** Schools, neighbourhood centres, and public programmes were highlighted as effective platforms for bringing generations together and fostering solidarity.



# SOCIAL ISOLATION AND LONELINESS: CONNECTING GENERATIONS FOR EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

## MODERATED DISCUSSION SESSION – LUCIE VIDOVIČOVÁ, OLGA TÓTH, KAI LEICHSENRING, MARCELA PETROVÁ KAFKOVÁ, EMILIA KRAMKOWSKA

**Summary:** The discussion on social isolation and loneliness highlighted the persistence of these issues across age groups and the ways in which intergenerational approaches had been mobilised to mitigate them. Panelists agreed that loneliness was not only a problem of advanced age but a life-course phenomenon, often intensified by crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, by labour-market transitions, or by disruptions in family networks. The conversation underscored that while digital technologies had offered temporary substitutes for in-person contact, they could not fully compensate for physical presence and shared activity.

Speakers repeatedly emphasised that strong and weak ties functioned differently during periods of stress. Strong ties—close family, intimate friends—remained the primary buffer against loneliness, but weak ties—neighbours, acquaintances, casual contacts—had also proved essential in maintaining a sense of belonging and everyday sociability. During the pandemic and other social disruptions, weak ties often collapsed first, leading to a narrowing of networks and greater vulnerability. The group concluded that policies should not only support family caregiving and close relationships but also deliberately create opportunities for weak-tie interactions through community spaces, public programmes, and urban design.

The session also reflected on the role of intergenerational practices. Examples included mentoring projects, grandparental involvement in childcare, intergenerational housing initiatives, and school-based programmes linking young and old. These practices were seen as effective both for preventing loneliness in older adults and for teaching empathy and resilience in younger generations. Participants

noted that such initiatives worked best when they were embedded in existing community institutions—schools, libraries, neighbourhood centres—rather than being stand-alone projects.

A recurrent theme was inequality. Loneliness and isolation were not evenly distributed but disproportionately affected people with limited financial resources, health limitations, or migrant backgrounds. The pandemic had exacerbated these disparities, as disadvantaged groups often lacked digital access or flexible work arrangements. It was therefore argued that interventions needed to be inclusive and adapted to the diversity of older adults, with particular attention to those at the intersection of multiple vulnerabilities.

Finally, the discussion turned to practical recommendations. It was proposed that municipalities invest in small-scale, accessible meeting points such as cafés in senior centres, community gardens, or intergenerational cultural events. Policy makers were urged to design health and social care services that included systematic screening for loneliness, followed by referrals to social programmes. Participants also pointed to the importance of training frontline staff—nurses, social workers, municipal employees—to recognise loneliness and address it proactively.

The session concluded with a call for a balanced model: strengthening close ties, protecting and restoring weak ties, and supporting intergenerational connections. Such a model, the participants argued, would contribute not only to individual well-being but also to more cohesive and resilient communities.

### Social Isolation and Loneliness: Main Takeaways

## SOCIAL ISOLATION AND LONELINESS: MAIN TAKEAWAYS

The session examined loneliness as a cross-generational challenge and explored intergenerational strategies to reduce its negative impact on well-being and social cohesion.

- 1. Acknowledge Loneliness Across the Life Course:** Loneliness is not confined to older adults but also affects people during life transitions such as bereavement, unemployment, or migration.
- 2. Strengthen Both Strong and Weak Ties:** Family and close friends remain vital, but weak ties with neighbours and community members are equally important and need deliberate support.
- 3. Leverage Intergenerational Programmes:** Initiatives like mentoring, intergenerational housing, and school-based projects proved effective in building empathy in youth and reducing isolation in older adults.
- 4. Ensure Inclusive Approaches:** Vulnerable groups—low-income seniors, migrants, and those with health limitations—face a higher risk of isolation, requiring tailored and accessible interventions.
- 5. Balance Digital Tools with Human Contact:** Technology can supplement connections, especially in crises, but can not replace the value of face-to-face relationships and shared activities.

# REDEFINING OLD AGE: IDENTITY, TRANSITIONS, AND PARTICIPATION

## PROUD OF WHO I AM – SELF ESTEEM AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT – LEYLA MAVI

**Summary:** Leyla Mavi's presentation explored how self-esteem in later life had been shaped by the intersection of biographical trajectories and historical context. She argued that ageing was not simply an individual psychological process but a phenomenon deeply influenced by collective experiences, social structures, and cultural narratives. Drawing on qualitative interviews and cohort-based comparisons, she showed that older adults who had lived through periods of political transformation, economic uncertainty, or rapid social change tended to construct their sense of self differently than those whose life courses had been marked by stability.

The research demonstrated that self-esteem was not static but evolved as individuals re-interpreted past experiences and achievements. Participants who engaged actively in community organisations, voluntary activities, or

intergenerational exchanges reported higher levels of pride in their identities, even when they had faced hardship earlier in life. Conversely, those who experienced exclusion or discrimination often carried forward narratives of diminished self-worth, unless they later found spaces for recognition and social validation.

Mavi emphasised that policy and practice should recognise these layered identities by creating opportunities for older people to share life stories, contribute meaningfully, and receive affirmation of their roles in society. She concluded that self-esteem in old age was not solely a matter of personal resilience but a collective responsibility: communities and institutions could either reinforce marginalisation or provide the conditions for older adults to feel proud of who they were.

## WHAT'S BOTHERING ME? THE FUTURE! – TRANSITIONS FROM (LONG TERM) UNEMPLOYMENT TO RETIREMENT – MIRKO SPORKET

**Summary:** Mirko Sporket's presentation examined the difficult pathways that many older adults experienced when moving from long-term unemployment into retirement. He argued that this transition was not a neutral, administrative process but a deeply social and psychological turning point. Drawing on qualitative interviews and labour-market data, he showed how prolonged joblessness in later life often eroded confidence, social status, and financial security. Participants described feelings of exclusion from both the workforce and civic life, and many saw retirement not as a reward after years of contribution but as a forced exit that sealed a period of struggle.

The presentation highlighted structural barriers that older unemployed workers had faced: limited opportunities for retraining, age discrimination in recruitment, and bureaucratic hurdles in accessing benefits. Sporket explained how these factors combined to create "scarring effects" that

extended into retirement, affecting not only income levels but also health, self-esteem, and social participation. Case studies illustrated that individuals who had received targeted counselling, bridging programmes, or community-based activation measures were able to reframe retirement more positively, experiencing it as a new beginning rather than a defeat.

He concluded that policy frameworks needed to treat late-career unemployment as a distinct life-course risk. Active labour-market policies, flexible pension pathways, and psychosocial support could reduce the stigma of long-term unemployment and restore dignity to older workers. Ultimately, Sporket emphasised that fairer transitions required society to recognise the contributions of older people even when their last years in the labour market were marked by insecurity.

## THE ROLE OF AGE IN MUSCULOSKELETAL DISEASE OUTCOMES: DO RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS AND OSTEOARTHRITIS DIFFER? – ALEXANDRA HUSIVARGOVÁ THEOFANIDIS

**Summary:** Alexandra Husivargová Theofanidis presented her research on the differential impact of age in two major musculoskeletal diseases: rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and osteoarthritis (OA). She emphasized that while both conditions were common in later life, their progression, patient experiences, and outcomes varied considerably depending on age.

The study compared clinical data and patient-reported outcomes across younger and older cohorts. In RA, older adults generally experienced more aggressive disease activity, delayed diagnosis, and higher levels of comorbidity, which collectively worsened functional outcomes and quality of life. In contrast, OA, while also strongly age-related, was characterized by more gradual progression and showed

greater variation in pain perception and coping strategies among different age groups.

Theofanidis highlighted that treatment responses were not uniform: older RA patients often faced limited access to advanced biologic therapies due to contraindications or cost barriers, whereas OA management in older cohorts was hampered by underuse of physiotherapy and overreliance on pharmacological interventions. She also noted gendered patterns, with women in both conditions reporting higher

pain intensity and more restrictions in daily activities.

Her conclusion stressed the importance of age-sensitive and individualized treatment strategies. She argued that clinicians and policymakers should account for age not simply as a risk factor but as a determinant of access, outcomes, and participation in care. She advocated for multidisciplinary approaches, stronger patient education, and preventive strategies that sustain function and independence into advanced age.

## REDEFINING OLD AGE: DISCRIMINATION, LONELINESS, AND SOCIAL BONDS

### AGEISM AND AGE DISCRIMINATION: STILL ON THE RISE IN CZECHIA – LUCIE VIDOVIČOVÁ

**Summary:** Lucie Vidovičová's presentation addressed the persistence and intensification of ageism and age discrimination in Czechia. She argued that despite progress in legal frameworks and awareness campaigns, discriminatory attitudes and practices had continued to shape the everyday lives of older people. Drawing on survey data and qualitative evidence, she showed that older adults frequently experienced stereotyping in employment, healthcare, and public discourse. Employers often perceived older workers as less adaptable, less productive, or technologically incapable, which contributed to early exits from the labour market and reinforced intergenerational tensions.

Vidovičová highlighted how the COVID-19 pandemic had reinforced ageist narratives, with public debates framing older people primarily as vulnerable and burdensome, rather than as active citizens with valuable contributions. She also discussed the role of the media in perpetuating simplistic

images of ageing, pointing to the dominance of deficit-based framings. Importantly, she demonstrated that ageism was not only a matter of individual prejudice but was embedded in institutional arrangements, from recruitment practices to service delivery models.

Her presentation concluded with a call for multi-level interventions. She emphasised the importance of stronger enforcement of anti-discrimination laws, targeted awareness campaigns, and the inclusion of older adults in decision-making processes. Vidovičová suggested that education, especially intergenerational projects in schools and workplaces, could play a key role in breaking down stereotypes. Ultimately, she urged policymakers, employers, and civil society to recognise ageism as a pressing social issue, comparable to other forms of discrimination, and to act decisively to create a society in which ageing was valued rather than marginalised.

### AGEISM IN GERMAN UNIVERSITIES – FREDERIKE GERDES

**Summary:** Frederike Gerdes examined the manifestations of ageism within German universities, focusing on both academic staff and older students. She demonstrated how higher education institutions, often perceived as progressive spaces, in fact reproduced age-based barriers. Her analysis drew on survey data and qualitative interviews with faculty and students across several German universities.

The findings showed that older academics frequently experienced subtle but persistent stereotypes, such as assumptions of lower technological competence, resistance to innovation, or diminished productivity. These perceptions influenced promotion prospects, research funding opportunities, and the distribution of teaching loads. In several cases, late-career scholars reported being overlooked for leadership positions or excluded from collaborative projects because they were seen as being “close to retirement.”

On the student side, older learners—those returning for degrees or pursuing education later in life—encountered structural challenges such as limited flexibility in course scheduling and insufficient recognition of prior professional experience. They also reported feelings of social isolation, since student services and campus cultures often targeted much younger cohorts.

Gerdes highlighted initiatives that had already begun to counteract these dynamics, including mentorship programmes that paired younger and older academics, and institutional policies encouraging lifelong learning and mixed-age classrooms. She concluded that universities needed to embrace ageing as an asset, ensuring that knowledge transfer, intergenerational exchange, and diversity were embedded into academic culture.

## LIVING APART, AGING TOGETHER: CHALLENGING THE BINARY OF COUPLEHOOD AND SINGLENESSE – MARLEN DREWITZ

**Summary:** Marlen Drewitz's presentation examined how conventional narratives around ageing tended to divide older adults into two categories: those who were married or in long-term partnerships and those who were single. She argued that this binary framework had overlooked the diversity of living arrangements and the nuanced ways in which older people created companionship, intimacy, and support outside of marriage.

Drawing on qualitative interviews and case studies, Drewitz demonstrated that older adults frequently cultivated strong, enduring networks of friends, neighbours, and extended family members who offered both emotional closeness and practical assistance. These networks often provided stability and well-being comparable to, or even exceeding, that experienced in couple relationships. She highlighted stories of individuals who intentionally chose to live alone but remained socially embedded, and others who formed "living

apart together" arrangements that combined independence with commitment.

Her findings also suggested that social policy, housing design, and care systems still assumed couple-based support as the default, which risked marginalising those outside this model. Drewitz stressed that recognising non-traditional living arrangements could improve social integration and reduce loneliness. She recommended broader definitions of partnership in service provision, greater investment in community-based housing models, and inclusive care frameworks that accounted for diverse relationship forms. Ultimately, the presentation revealed that ageing well did not depend exclusively on couplehood. Instead, it depended on the quality of one's social bonds and the recognition of alternative pathways to connection, dignity, and support in later life.

## IS THERE A PENSION PENALTY FOR LATE CAREER FAMILY CAREGIVING? – LAURA ROMEU GORDO

**Summary:** Laura Romeu Gordo examined whether taking on family caregiving responsibilities late in one's career translated into lower pension entitlements. Drawing on comparative European data and national pension regulations, she explored how the timing of caregiving episodes intersected with contribution histories and pension formulas.

Her analysis showed that late-career caregiving often coincided with critical years for pension accumulation, when earnings and contributions tended to peak. Interruptions at this stage, even if temporary, disproportionately reduced entitlements compared with earlier career breaks. Women were particularly affected, reflecting gendered patterns of caregiving and labour-market attachment. Men who provided late-career care were less likely to experience severe pension penalties, but they too faced reduced accrual in systems with

strong links between recent earnings and benefits.

Romeu Gordo discussed how pension credits, care allowances, and flexible retirement pathways partially mitigated these penalties in some countries, but she argued that policies remained fragmented and uneven across Europe. She highlighted the importance of integrating pension design with broader long-term care and labour-market policies to avoid disadvantaging older workers who assumed caregiving roles.

She concluded that recognising and compensating late-career caregiving was essential not only for gender equality but also for intergenerational fairness, as societies increasingly relied on older workers to combine paid employment with informal care.

### Social Isolation and Loneliness: Main Takeaways

## REDEFINING OLD AGE: MAIN TAKEAWAYS

The sessions explored identity, transitions, discrimination, and social bonds in later life, challenging stereotypes and highlighting ways to ensure dignity and participation.

- 1. Embrace Diversity in Ageing:** Old age was shown to be diverse, shaped by culture, health, and personal identity. Recognising this plurality strengthens self-esteem and inclusion.
- 2. Ease Transitions into Retirement and Care:** Moving from work or caregiving into new life stages create uncertainty. Flexible retirement, counselling, and support for caregivers were recommended.
- 3. Confront Ageism:** Persistent age discrimination in workplaces, universities, and daily life calls for stronger policies, awareness campaigns, and institutional reforms.
- 4. Redefine Relationships and Social Bonds:** New forms of intimacy and living arrangements, as well as community initiatives, help combat loneliness and expand support networks.
- 5. Promote Agency and Participation:** Older adults should be seen as active citizens and contributors, with full rights to civic, cultural, and political participation.

# INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY AND ECONOMIC RESILIENCE IN AN AGING SOCIETY 1

## CHALLENGES OF THE HEALTH STATUS OF PEOPLE IN THE LABOUR MARKET: STRESSORS, SKILLS AS A PREREQUISITE FOR INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY – OLEKSANDR POLIAKOV

**Summary:** Oleksandr Poliakov's presentation examined the health challenges of people active in the labour market in Ukraine between 2022 and 2025, focusing on the impact of war, pandemic disruptions, and structural economic stressors. He reported findings from the use of so-called "Human Health Passports," which had monitored indicators of physical activity, health status, and skills acquisition among working-age adults. The evidence demonstrated that both the war and the pandemic had significantly weakened health outcomes: physical activity levels had declined, rehabilitation needs had risen, and risks of chronic stress and burnout had increased.

The study also showed that gendered skill development had regressed. Women and men faced different barriers to maintaining or updating their professional competencies, which in turn affected labour-market participation and

resilience. In particular, the data highlighted a sharp decline in digital skills among certain cohorts, which Poliakov linked directly to limitations in intergenerational solidarity, as younger and older workers found it more difficult to share tasks and responsibilities effectively.

He concluded that strengthening intergenerational solidarity required a combined strategy: expanding vocational rehabilitation and health promotion in the workplace, embedding lifelong learning opportunities (especially digital skills), and creating conditions that preserved physical capacity and adaptability across cohorts. Such measures, he argued, would not only reduce health inequalities but also enable older and younger workers to support one another more effectively, thus increasing both economic resilience and social cohesion.

## DEMOGRAPHIC AGEING AND ECONOMIC RESILIENCE: HOW ACTIVE AGEING CAN SUPPORT POST WAR RECOVERY – DMYTRO SHUSHPANOV

**Summary:** Mr. Shushpanov's presentation highlighted how demographic ageing had intersected with the severe disruptions of war in Ukraine. He noted that the country had been experiencing rapid population ageing long before 2022, but the war had accelerated labour shortages, increased mortality, and intensified out-migration. These overlapping dynamics had created an urgent need to rethink the role of older adults in national recovery.

He argued that, rather than being perceived solely as a burden, older people could represent an underutilised asset for resilience. His analysis drew on demographic projections and labour-market data, which demonstrated that raising the participation of people aged 55+ had the potential to mitigate the decline in the working-age population. He also described examples of active ageing programmes and community initiatives that had already shown promise in

maintaining employability, social engagement, and volunteer contributions among older cohorts.

Mr. Shushpanov emphasised that this approach required policy frameworks that supported health promotion, re-skilling, and flexible employment conditions. He stressed the importance of tackling ageism in the workplace and developing targeted measures for older workers, such as lifelong learning, ergonomic adaptations, and incentives for employers.

In conclusion, he suggested that post-war recovery strategies should integrate active ageing as a core dimension of resilience. By mobilising the knowledge, skills, and civic commitment of older Ukrainians, the country could both address labour shortages and foster greater intergenerational solidarity during a period of reconstruction and renewal.

## AGEING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: THE SECOND DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND – ELENA ŞOLDAN

**Summary:** Elena Şoldan's presentation addressed population ageing through the lens of the second demographic dividend, a framework that described how longer lives and shifts in age structure could generate new sources of economic growth. She argued that ageing was not solely a fiscal burden but also an opportunity, provided that societies invested strategically in human capital and health across the life course.

She explained that as fertility rates declined and longevity increased, the initial "first demographic dividend" of a larger working-age population eventually gave way to challenges of supporting older cohorts. However, the second dividend could emerge if individuals and institutions responded by saving more for retirement, remaining economically active for longer, and maintaining higher levels of productivity. In



this way, ageing populations could contribute to resilience rather than undermine it.

Şoldan illustrated her points with cross-national comparisons, showing how countries that had improved education, lifelong learning, and preventive healthcare had also extended productive life expectancy. She emphasized that participation of older adults in the labour market, civic life, and volunteering represented not just a social benefit but also a macroeconomic resource.

Her conclusion highlighted policy levers: strengthening pension systems to encourage savings, promoting active ageing strategies, and ensuring equal access to lifelong education and training. By reframing ageing as an engine for innovation and growth, Şoldan demonstrated that demographic change had the potential to reinforce rather than weaken long-term economic development.

## INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY AND ECONOMIC RESILIENCE IN AN AGING SOCIETY 2

### ■ INTERGENERATIONAL SUPPORT DURING WARTIME – IRYNA KURYLO

**Summary:** Iryna Kurylo's presentation examined how patterns of intergenerational support were reshaped by the realities of wartime. She described how the war had disrupted everyday life in Ukraine, forcing families to adapt to new living arrangements, cope with migration, and compensate for the loss of public services. Despite these pressures, she noted that intergenerational solidarity had not weakened but instead took on new forms of resilience.

Households often reorganised across multiple generations under one roof, which strengthened daily support exchanges. Adult children provided financial assistance, remote emotional support, and practical help to ageing parents, while older generations frequently contributed childcare, household stability, and the transfer of scarce resources. Migration played a dual role: it sometimes reduced immediate contact, but it also enabled financial remittances that sustained relatives left behind.

Kurylo highlighted how the decline or disruption of formal health and social services during wartime placed additional burdens on families. Older adults, who were already vulnerable, depended more heavily on informal networks, particularly for access to medicine, transport, and emotional reassurance. She stressed that resilience strategies were highly context-dependent, shaped by local community capacity and the adaptability of families under crisis conditions.

In conclusion, the presentation underlined the urgent need for policies that acknowledged the central role of families in emergencies, while also building backup mechanisms in health, housing, and social care systems. By doing so, societies could better safeguard both older and younger generations in times of profound disruption.

### ■ THE IMPACT OF POPULATION AGING ON INTERGENERATIONAL ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIPS IN GEORGIA – JOSEB ARCHVADZE

**Summary:** In his presentation, Professor Joseb Archvadze examined how rapid demographic ageing had reshaped intergenerational economic relationships in Georgia. He demonstrated that the country had experienced a steady rise in the share of older adults, accompanied by a declining working-age population. This demographic shift had already placed pressure on traditional family support networks and on the public pension system, which continued to play a central role in income security for older generations.

Archvadze explained that, historically, Georgian families had absorbed much of the responsibility for supporting older relatives through financial transfers, co-residence, and informal care. However, migration of younger cohorts and changes in labour-market participation patterns had reduced the capacity of families to provide consistent support. As a result, intergenerational transfers had become less predictable and more dependent on remittances from abroad.

He further argued that the pension system, while essential, faced long-term sustainability challenges under current demographic trends. Without reforms, the shrinking contributor base would have struggled to finance adequate benefits for a growing number of retirees. Archvadze highlighted the need for policies that promoted higher labour-force participation, especially among women and older adults, as well as complementary savings mechanisms to diversify retirement income sources.

Concluding, he noted that addressing these issues required not only economic measures but also renewed attention to intergenerational solidarity. Policymakers, he suggested, should encourage stronger civic, community, and institutional frameworks that could balance the weakening capacity of family support with more robust and sustainable public arrangements.



## **POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN LATER LIFE IN GERMANY – OLIVER PLATT**

**Summary:** Oliver Platt's presentation examined how older adults in Germany participated in politics and how this participation evolved over time. He explained that participation was not limited to voting but also included membership in political parties, civil associations, local initiatives, and volunteering. Drawing on national survey data and comparative European findings, Platt showed that while turnout rates among older voters remained high, engagement in more demanding forms of participation had been uneven.

He reported that older adults were often active in local communities, where personal networks and familiarity with decision-makers encouraged involvement. However, structural barriers such as digitalisation of administrative procedures, limited accessibility of public spaces, and insufficient outreach to people with health impairments

restricted broader inclusion. The presentation also noted generational differences: those who retired in the 2000s had higher levels of political socialisation than earlier cohorts, shaping their attitudes toward activism and civic engagement.

Platt emphasised that participation was strongly associated with social integration and well-being in later life. Older adults who remained active in political or civic life tended to report lower levels of loneliness and a stronger sense of belonging. He concluded by recommending targeted measures to remove barriers—such as age-friendly communication strategies, hybrid (online/offline) participation formats, and recognition of informal civic contributions. According to him, political participation in later life should be seen not only as a right but also as a key resource for democratic resilience in ageing societies.

## **INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY AND ECONOMIC RESILIENCE IN AN AGING SOCIETY 3**

### **PENSION SYSTEMS IN LOW INCOME COUNTRIES: CHALLENGES, MODELS AND PATHS TO SUSTAINABILITY – OLGA GAGAUZ**

**Summary:** Olga Gagauz presented a comparative analysis of pension systems in low-income countries, using Moldova as a central case while drawing on examples from other European states. She highlighted that pay-as-you-go (PAYG) schemes, while still dominant, had become increasingly unsustainable under conditions of rapid demographic ageing, high emigration, and persistent informality in labour markets. Her analysis showed that the shrinking contributor base and rising longevity placed severe strain on the fiscal capacity of the first pillar of pensions, leading to questions of both adequacy and fairness.

She reviewed policy debates on multi-pillar reforms, noting that second-pillar funded schemes had often faced delays or reversals due to limited fiscal space, lack of trust in financial institutions, and insufficient regulatory capacity. At the same time, she observed that voluntary savings and private pension arrangements remained accessible only to a small share of the population, leaving the majority dependent on modest PAYG benefits.

Gagauz underscored the risks of widening inequalities, as rural populations, women, and those with fragmented employment histories were more likely to experience poverty in old age. She recommended stabilising the first pillar through better collection of contributions, measures to reduce informality, and gradual adjustments of retirement ages to reflect demographic realities. At the same time, she argued for cautious but steady development of complementary funded mechanisms, supported by financial literacy campaigns and transparent governance.

In conclusion, she emphasised that while no single model could be transplanted wholesale, low-income countries needed to pursue incremental, evidence-based reforms that ensured sustainability without sacrificing adequacy, thereby protecting intergenerational solidarity in ageing societies.

### **CAN MOLDOVA SUSTAIN PENSION GROWTH? FORECASTING TO 2040 THROUGH ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC LENSES – ARTIOM SAMOHVALOV**

**Summary:** Artiom Samohvalov presented forward-looking projections on the sustainability of Moldova's pension system, using demographic scenarios and macroeconomic sensitivity analyses. He explained that the study combined population forecasts with expected economic growth trajectories to

estimate whether pensions could realistically grow in real terms up to 2040.

His analysis showed that under moderate economic development, Moldova still had room for real pension growth,

but the balance between contributors and beneficiaries would become increasingly fragile after the mid-2030s. He emphasised that ageing, migration, and shrinking workforce participation placed long-term pressure on the pay-as-you-go system. To mitigate these risks, Samohvalov discussed the role of complementary pillars, noting that mandatory funded pensions could help, but only if carefully introduced after macroeconomic stabilisation.

The presentation highlighted policy challenges, including contribution compliance, indexation rules, and maintaining adequate benefit levels without jeopardising fiscal stability. He pointed out that pension adequacy remained a major

concern, especially for those with interrupted work histories or long-term emigration patterns.

Samohvalov concluded that Moldova could sustain pension growth in the short and medium term if reforms were phased in gradually, the labour market was strengthened, and productivity improved. However, he cautioned that without structural adjustments, the system might struggle to guarantee both sustainability and adequacy beyond 2040. His findings reinforced the importance of long-term planning, transparent communication, and coordinated pension and labour-market reforms.

## DO EMPLOYEES APPROACHING RETIREMENT AGE IN POLAND EXPERIENCE GREATER LEVELS OF DISADVANTAGE COMPARED TO THOSE UNDER 50? – IZABELA WARWAS

**Summary:** Izabela Warwas's presentation explored whether employees nearing retirement age in Poland faced greater disadvantages compared to their younger colleagues under 50. The study drew on mixed-methods research, combining survey data with qualitative interviews, to assess late-career employment conditions, job security, and perceptions of age discrimination.

Her analysis revealed that older workers frequently reported higher levels of disadvantage, particularly regarding career development opportunities, access to training, and perceptions of being sidelined in organisational decision-making. Many respondents described feeling "invisible" within their workplaces once they reached their mid-50s. At the same time, younger employees tended to have more flexible working arrangements and greater access to professional development, highlighting a generational gap.

The qualitative component underscored these findings: interviewees approaching retirement age often experienced subtle but persistent forms of ageism, including reduced expectations from managers, limited chances to take on innovative projects, and doubts about their adaptability to technological change. Despite these challenges, older employees expressed a strong willingness to continue working and contributing their experience, provided adequate support and recognition were in place.

Warwas concluded that Polish workplaces needed to adopt more age-inclusive human resources practices, such as lifelong learning programmes, mentorship schemes that valorise experience, and flexible employment pathways into retirement. She argued that recognising the strengths of late-career employees was essential not only for fairness but also for sustaining workforce resilience in an ageing society.

## INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY AND ECONOMIC RESILIENCE IN AN AGING SOCIETY: MAIN TAKEAWAYS

The three sessions explored how ageing populations affect labour markets, pensions, and intergenerational cohesion, and how resilience can be built through fair resource sharing and active ageing.

- 1. Promote Health and Lifelong Skills:** Poor health and skill mismatches limit older adults' labour-market participation; preventive health, workplace adaptation, and lifelong learning are vital to sustain productivity.
- 2. Leverage Active Ageing for Resilience:** Older adults contribute to post-crisis recovery and growth through work, volunteering, and caregiving—capturing the "second demographic dividend."
- 3. Reform Pensions and Social Protection:** Fiscal sustainability requires diversifying funding, extending coverage to informal workers, and protecting against pension penalties for caregivers.
- 4. Support Families During Crises:** In Georgia, Ukraine, and other contexts, intergenerational financial and caregiving transfers proved critical survival strategies, showing the need to reinforce both informal and formal safety nets.
- 5. Ensure Fair Intergenerational Balance:** Policies must prevent demographic ageing from overburdening younger cohorts by promoting equitable cost-sharing and encouraging political and civic participation of older generations.

# TECHNOLOGY FAIR

**Overview:** The associated Technology Fair showcased solutions that promote longer healthy and active lives,

enhance safety and well being, reduce social isolation, and extend access to quality health and social care.

## FROM GAMES AND PETBOTS TOWARDS SMART AND SAFE

**Jaroslav Cibulka**, PhD candidate and researcher at Czech Institute of Informatics, Robotics and Cybernetics, presented a series of prototypes that demonstrated how playful technologies could evolve into practical tools supporting independent living in later life. His talk began with experimental “petbot” companions and interactive games designed to encourage activity, social engagement, and cognitive stimulation among older adults. He then described how these playful foundations were gradually transformed into safety-oriented applications, such as systems for monitoring movement patterns, detecting risks at home, and offering unobtrusive reminders for everyday tasks. The audience was shown how low-threshold technologies, familiar interfaces, and game-based motivation increased acceptance and long-term use among seniors. Cibulka also reflected on the importance of balancing entertainment with reliability and safety, stressing that emotional engagement often determined whether a device became part of everyday routines. His presentation highlighted the potential of user-friendly, game-derived technologies to bridge fun and functionality, creating environments that were both engaging and protective.

## COGNITIVE TRAINING IN VIRTUAL REALITY FOR ELDERLY: IMMERSIVE VS. NON IMMERSIVE

**Markéta Zakurdajeva’s** presentation (National Institute of Mental Health, Researcher) focused on how virtual reality (VR) could be applied to support cognitive training among older adults. She compared immersive VR experiences, delivered through head-mounted displays, with non-immersive approaches using desktop screens. Her study showed that immersive VR engaged participants more strongly, stimulated higher levels of motivation, and created a greater sense of presence, which in turn encouraged consistent participation in training sessions. At the same time, she acknowledged that immersive VR posed challenges, such as usability barriers, motion sickness for some users, and the need for careful facilitation. Non-immersive VR, while less engaging, was easier to operate and proved suitable for older adults with mobility or sensory limitations. The presentation emphasized that both approaches had value: immersive VR offered strong potential for enhancing adherence and enjoyment, while non-immersive methods provided a more accessible entry point. She concluded that tailoring solutions to individual needs and preferences was key to effectiveness.

## VIRTUAL REALITY AS A SUPPORTIVE TOOL FOR AGEING

**Natálie Nevřelová**, from Virtual Reality and Neuroscience Centre of National Institute of Mental Health, presented innovative applications of virtual reality (VR) as a supportive tool for older adults, with a focus on promoting engagement, rehabilitation, and well-being. She demonstrated how VR environments had been used to motivate seniors to remain physically and cognitively active, offering stimulating experiences that would otherwise be inaccessible. The presentation highlighted both immersive and non-immersive approaches, stressing that even simple and affordable VR setups could deliver meaningful benefits when properly adapted to user needs. Ms. Nevřelová reported that participants who engaged with VR showed increased motivation for exercise, improved mood, and a greater sense of inclusion in community life. She also addressed the importance of safety and accessibility, noting that gradual introduction and guided facilitation reduced potential discomfort. Concluding, she argued that VR should not be regarded as a luxury technology, but rather as a practical and scalable instrument for supporting active ageing in diverse settings.

## PAINTING GAME USING WEBCAM EYEGAZE TRACKING WITH FOVEATED RENDERING

**Ármin Kondor**, Computer Science Engineer Student at Pannon University, presented an innovative application that combined creative expression with accessible assistive technology. His “Painting Game” enabled users to produce digital artwork using only eye movements, tracked through a standard webcam. The system employed foveated rendering to reduce processing demands, thereby improving responsiveness and usability without the need for costly hardware. Kondor demonstrated how this approach had the potential to expand participation in digital creativity for older adults, people with motor impairments, and others facing physical limitations. The presentation emphasized both the technical achievement and the social value of enabling artistic activity in an inclusive, low-barrier format. By situating the project within broader debates on digital participation and well-being, Kondor highlighted how playful, user-friendly technologies could enhance autonomy, motivation, and quality of life. His work illustrated that accessible design, when paired with creativity, could transform technology into a medium for empowerment rather than exclusion.

## INTOUCH — DAILY CALLS TO KEEP YOUR LOVED ONE ENGAGED & INDEPENDENT

**Vassili Le Moigne & Peter Grajcar** presented *inTouch*, a lightweight remote-contact and support platform designed to strengthen everyday routines and emotional security for older adults. The solution built on the simple but powerful principle of a regular phone call: each day, the system prompted or automatically initiated a brief check-in, confirming the well-being of the older person and offering them an opportunity for social connection. Unlike more complex telecare products, *inTouch* deliberately employed familiar interfaces, making it accessible even for users with limited digital literacy.

Le Moigne explained how the platform integrated a “human-in-the-loop” model, whereby daily calls could be managed by relatives, volunteers, or professional carers. When users did not respond, alerts were sent to designated contacts, ensuring that potential emergencies were not overlooked. The system was also adaptable: families could personalise the frequency, timing, and escalation protocols according to individual routines and risk profiles.

The presenters emphasised that beyond safety, the technology aimed to reduce isolation by embedding regular social interactions into daily life. They shared pilot experiences where older adults reported reassurance, while families valued the peace of mind that someone was “checking in.” The presentation concluded with a call for partnerships to expand adoption in community and home-care settings.

# KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

## KAI LEICHSENRING (AT)

Executive Director, European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research. Specialist in ageing, health and long term care, governance and financing, quality management, labour conditions, user involvement and informal care. Extensive advisory roles to governments and international agencies.

## RUTH ŠORMOVÁ (CZ)

Director of the pro senior organisation ŽIVOT 90, z.ú. (founded 1990, Prague). Former special education teacher with a career dedicated to social services and civil society, including work with the Diaconia of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, Portimo, o.p.s., palliative and hospice care (Home Hospice Cesta domů; Mobile Hospice Forum), and support for informal caregivers. Since March 2025 she has led ŽIVOT 90, focusing on dignified ageing within community based social services and public engagement.

## LISA WARTH (UN)

Head of the Population Unit, UNECE. Leads policy dialogue and capacity building on demographic change, supporting implementation and appraisal of ageing related international frameworks across the UNECE region. Formerly coordinated WHO's Global Network of Age friendly Cities and Communities.

## KRISTINA BARCZIK (DE)

Professor of Health Education & Health Pedagogy at the University of Applied Sciences – CBS with EUFH. She chairs the non profit association Gemeinsam Digital e.V. and leads the network "Future Technologies for Successful Ageing." Her work focuses on overcoming barriers to digital participation among older adults and promoting inclusive, technology based solutions in care, health, and education. She leads projects such as *Together into the Digital World (since 2017)* and *Future Technologies for Successful Ageing in Rural Areas (since 2019)*. She holds a PhD in Educational Science from TU Dresden, with academic training in adult education, international management, media/project management, and economics.

# CONFERENCE FACT SHEET

The 8th annual (eng)aging! International Conference on Aging & Technology Fair was held on June 5–6, 2025, in Prague. The event took place in a hybrid format at Česká spořitelna Palace (Rytířská 29, Praha 1), combining in-person participation with livestream access for a broad international audience.

This year's edition focused on intergenerational cohesion as a guiding theme, exploring how societies can foster solidarity, fairness, and cooperation across age groups in the context of demographic change. Keynote lectures, thematic panels, and discussion sessions addressed topics such as family dynamics, caregiving, loneliness and social integration,

discrimination, late-life transitions, and economic resilience in aging societies. Special attention was given to the role of intergenerational relationships in emotional well-being and to the opportunities of redefining old age through active participation and inclusive policies.

The associated Technology Fair once again showcased innovative products and solutions—including virtual reality applications, cognitive training tools, eye-tracking games, and digital platforms for remote engagement—demonstrating the potential of technology to support independent living, reduce isolation, and enhance the quality of life of older adults.

## THE CONFERENCE ON SOCIAL MEDIA



[facebook.com/engagingprague](https://facebook.com/engagingprague)



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## STEERING COMMITTEE:

**Yeal Benvenisti**, CEO, Mediterranean Towers Ventures (Israel)

**Rosette Faruggia-Bonello**, Deputy Director, International Institute on Ageing – United Nations (Malta)

**Juhani Ilmarinen** (emeritus), Former Director, Dept. of Physiology, Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (FIOH) (Finland)

**Kateřina Macháčová**, Director, Centre of Expertise in Longevity – International Longevity Centre (Czech Republic)

**Jérôme Pigniez**, Founder & President, On-Medio & SilverEco.org (France)

**Alexandre Sidorenko** (Chair), Former Chief, United Nations Programme on Ageing (Austria)

**Vladimír Špidla**, Former Prime Minister of the Czech Republic & Former European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (Czech Republic)

**Ilona Štorová**, Chairwoman, Age Management z.s. (Czech Republic)

**Bogusława Urbaniak**, Professor, Department of Labour and Social Policy, Faculty of Economics and Sociology, University of Lodz (Poland)

# PARTNERS

The 8th (eng)aging! Conference took place under the auspices of Marian Jurečka, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic, and Alexandra Udženija, Councillor of the City of Prague. It was co-organized by the Active Aging Center and KEYNOTE.

The project was co-financed by the International Visegrad Fund, the Czech-German Future Fund, Liaison Office of the Free State of Saxony, and Česká spořitelna.

The partners of the Visegrad project included:

- Faculty of Economics and Sociology, University of Łódź
- Czech Institute of Informatics, Robotics and Cybernetics, Czech Technical University in Prague
- Faculty of Electronics, Telecommunications and Informatics, Gdańsk University of Technology
- Technical University of Košice
- Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice
- Faculty of Sociology, University of Białystok
- Centre of Expertise in Longevity and Long-Term Care, Charles University, Prague
- Faculty of Information Technology, University of Pannonia
- Ilia State University, Georgia
- National Institute for Economic Research, Moldova
- National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine

The partners of the Czech-German Future Fund project were:

- German Centre of Gerontology
- Chair of Building Realization and Robotics, Technical University of Munich
- Technical University of Dresden

The (eng)aging! project is run by Active Aging Center (AAC), a non-governmental organization, which develops projects focused on improving the lives of older people - "Happy Senior" and "Good Investment", in cooperation with KEYNOTE, a well-established consultancy.

## Organizers:



## General Partner:



## Main Partner:



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## Auspices:

## CONTACT



**Martin Špáta**

Project Coordinator

+420 608 153 456

[spata@keynote.cz](mailto:spata@keynote.cz)

[www.engagingprague.com](http://www.engagingprague.com)



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