

2024 (eng)aging! Conference & Technology fair

Press Release

June 21, 2024, Prague

The seventh edition of the international conference on population aging, organized in the framework of the long-term eng(aging)! project, took place in Prague and was streamed online on June 20-21, 2024. The event was attended by many world-renowned experts, including Ms. Iva Holmerová, Maciej Julian Kucharczyk, Amal Abou Rafeh, and Rebecca Choy Yung. Ms. Holmerová is a leading figure in geriatrics and the founder of the Czech Alzheimer's Society. Kucharczyk is notable for his work in aging-related policies in the EU. Abou Rafeh, Chief of the Programme on Ageing at the UN, is recognized for her contributions to social policy and demography. Rebecca Choy is a pioneer in social innovation and the founder of the Golden Age Foundation.

The 2024 edition of the Conference discussed two main topics: Preparing for Longevity and Ageism and Social Challenges of Older People.

Amal Rafeh highlighted the inevitability of an aging world. She pointed out that population aging and increased lifespan are certain future trends, regardless of a country's development status. This demographic shift means that up to six generations will coexist in the future. To harness the potential of this trend, Rafeh emphasized the need for policies that adopt an intergenerational approach, recognizing the opportunities presented by population aging and longevity.

Maciej Kucharczyk addressed the negative connotations associated with the term "elderly," which often equates old age with frailty. He noted that not all older individuals are frail and stressed the widespread perception of ageism, with 45% of people believing it is rampant in their countries. Ageism, often seen as the most accepted form of discrimination, presents institutional challenges. Since 1967, global life expectancy has risen, and by 2100, it is projected to reach 83 years. Kucharczyk advocated for equal rights for older individuals and emphasized the role of digital technology in reducing loneliness among the older people, despite barriers like digital illiteracy. He criticized the EU's equality framework for lacking a strategy to address age inequality and called for anti-discrimination legislation against ageism.

Miroslava Kanerova, a volunteer for ŽIVOT 90, observed a growing public concern about ageism. She questioned why this concern has surged recently despite extensive research on the negative impacts of age discrimination. Kanerova noted the poor image of older persons, often seen as passive recipients of public services, which exacerbates loneliness and mental health issues. This stereotype renders older people invisible and excluded from society. She advocated for a shift in mindset towards older people, urging reflection on the quality of life we desire for all. Kanerova also pointed out that the stereotype of passive older individuals is internalized, leading many to resign from active roles. She challenged the socio-political context in which ageism occurs, not the attention it receives.

Iva Holmerová emphasized the importance of recognizing the unique perspectives of people with dementia. She highlighted that the number of people with dementia in Europe is equivalent

to the population of the Czech Republic. Holmerová called for the development of systems and societies that are friendly to those living with dementia, valuing their enriching and innovative viewpoints.

Special panels with the participation of experts from the Visegrad countries (V4), Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, and Germany in 2024 focused on the pathway to healthy aging, dementia and Alzheimer's disease, social maladies negatively affecting older peoples' lives, critical analysis of aging and technology, and preparing for old age.

There was a practical workshop focusing on examples of good practice in age management (in Czech), which provided a comprehensive overview of effective age management strategies at the state policy level, self-governing level, and business level.

At the Technology Fair, which was an associated event of the conference, technological visions, solutions, innovations, services, and products for current and future generations of older persons and their specific needs were presented.

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 are the [International Visegrad Fund](#), [Czech-German Future Fund](#), [JTI](#), [Centre of Expertise in Longevity and Long-term Care](#), [Liason Office of the Free State of Saxony](#) 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 7th 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 2024 edition will be held physically and will be streamed online.