



SALZBURG
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Aging Societies: Advancing Innovation and Equity

Monday, November 2, 2015



“The problem we are facing isn’t aging – the wrong policies are the problem!”

As our societies grow older and our tax bases decrease, aging is often cited as one of the greatest problems facing developed nations – and one soon to be faced in developing nations also.

However, as one speaker at the Salzburg Global program *Aging Societies: Advancing Innovation and Equity* said: it is not aging that is the problem, but the poorly formed or mis-directed policies that deal with aging societies that are the problem.

We are currently facing a “longevity revolution” with people living far longer than previously expected, and too many countries are “sleepwalking into a crisis without much preparation,” said Salzburg Global Program Director Tatsiana Lintouskaya, opening the four-day program at Schloss Leopoldskron.

“There are probably more people aged 60+ alive today than the total sum of people who lived to the age of 60 throughout history,” according to the UN, with life now less of a sprint and more of a marathon, remarked one speaker.

We need a holistic approach to aging, urged session co-chair, Alexandre Kalache, addressing not only the related

health concerns, but also providing life-long-learning so that people can remain active in the workforce and their communities for longer; improving social support so that while services can be provided in the homes of the elderly, they are not forced to remain in their homes; and ensuring the financial sustainability of living so much longer.

“Very often we think about aging as medical care,” added session co-chair Janice Chia, founder and managing director of Ageing Asia Pte Ltd, touching on the perception of aging in society. “I think that it’s also about making our society more aging aware.” Simple measures such as increasing the number of seats in a shopping mall would make public spaces more aging-friendly and enable older members of society to maintain a sense of independence – and inclusion.

This thought was echoed in the opening session’s panel, which touched on growth and prosperity in aging societies. “We need to move from thinking about aging as a chronological and backward process to also being a prospective and forward concept,” said Peter Vanhuyse, professor of

comparative welfare state research at the University of Southern Denmark.

Fellow opening panelist Andreas Esche, director of the Shaping Sustainable Economies Program at the Bertelsmann Stiftung, highlighted the need to consider broadening the tax-base.

Public expenditure on individual citizens increases as they age, while their contribution in taxes to the public purse peaks during their working life and falls rapidly after retirement. Ensuring the financial sustainability of services will mean that this balance will need to be readdressed. Increasing the retirement age, reducing pension spending, charging more for health and social services, taxing pensions, and encouraging highly-skilled (and high-tax paying) migrants to move to aging countries are just some of the possible solutions being explored or gradually implemented – but are there possible solutions that haven’t yet been considered?

Over the next four days, 52 experts from 23 countries across the world will convene in Salzburg hoping to find such solutions and consider better policies to tackle the aging “problem.”



Pieter Vanhuysse, panel moderator Eric Thode, and Andreas Esche

Hot Topic: “What are the three most important factors to ensuring sustainable and equitable aging societies?”

Ana Alania & Heather Jaber

“ Number one and most important is education, so preparing for whatever is coming and do better than we do. Number two is adjusting our social security systems to aging, mainly in health. And number three is readdressing the income side or public revenue side by kind of broadening the tax-base. ”

Andreas Esche

Director, Shaping Sustainable Economies Program; Member of the Management Committee, Bertelsmann Stiftung, Germany

“ 1) Health longevity: To be stronger as we age, it’s not about how long we live but how healthy we are so that we can age-in-place successfully and independently.

2) Workplace policy transformation: To change how we view productivity, e.g., flexible hours, working from home, project-based work to suit changing psychographics of elderly.

3) Care-giving careers transformation: Care careers are not just care-giving. Increasingly, it will be about services to

enable older people to age successfully at home. Social + health + lifestyle services. ”

Janice Chia

Founder and Managing Director, Ageing Asia Pte Ltd, Singapore

“ The very first is to raise awareness that aging is... the most important societal achievement of the last century. It’s fantastic to age – not to age means dying early. My life expectancy was 43 when I was born in Brazil, today it’s 73. This is a tremendous achievement, but many people in societies don’t recognize that so raising awareness that aging is, first of all, an achievement and it is good for you is very important. The second is that, yeah it is an achievement, but it is also a challenge and most countries are ill-prepared. For instance, if you see how university students today are trained (not only in health but in general) very little consideration is given to aging, and if you don’t prepare the next generations to understand that aging is here to stay, you are not going to find answers. And the last is sustainable policies. To afford things like my

country, Brazil, is doing which is to have huge benefits for few and so many people without the basics to survive, and then you end up blaming aging when in fact it is bad policies. ”

Alexandre Kalache

President, International Longevity Centre (ILC); Co-President, ILC Global Alliance, Brazil

“ Education, education, education is maybe the single most important way to go for aging societies. What do I mean by that? I think we need to do work on the *quantity* of education, for example in many countries, less in the Western world and in the developing world, women are still underqualified, which is a shame. The *quality* of education obviously in terms of the quality of teachers, therefore their payments and their social status [needs to improve]... but thirdly also the *content* of education and this is the one big under-researched question today about tomorrow: [what are] the new skills we need to teach today for tomorrow? Since tomorrow is not very well known – the future is inherently unpredictable – my suggestion would

be we have to educate people, first of all, more to be wide as oppose to narrow, more generalist (especially in the early stages of education) than specialists. ... And in addition to that we have to try and see how we can make them creative problem solvers... Because we don't know what will be the problems of tomorrow except for population aging, which is predictable... With technological changes inherently unpredictable we don't really know what we need to teach for tomorrow except that we need to teach skills to tackle those problems tomorrow. And the last thing I would say relating to education is that of course education should never stop. That's why I proposed that we should move to a paradigm of not active aging but the *quintuple A story* – *The Active Aging At All Ages*. So just like pension reform must start with babies, giving them skills to be productive in their work by supporting elderly generations... this active aging also needs to start with younger people because throughout their life course, throughout their working careers, as well as their educational careers, they need to upscale their grade and reconnect with the constantly evolving and changing demands of the labor market.”

Pieter Vanhuyse

Professor of comparative welfare state research at the Department of Political Science and Public Management, University of Southern Denmark



1. Janice Chia

2. Andreas Esche

3. Salzburg Global's Benjamin Glahn and Tatsiana Lintouskaya

4. Alexandre Kalache

5. Kalache asks: "Is society prepared?"





Join in online!

If you're interested in writing either an op-ed style article or a personal reflection blog post whilst you're here this week, please let Salzburg Global Editor, Louise Hallman know or email your submission directly to lhallman@salzburgglobal.org.

If you do intend to write for your own organization either whilst you're here or after the session, please make sure to observe the **Chatham House Rule** (information on which is in your Welcome Pack). If you're in any doubt, do not hesitate to contact Louise.

We'll be updating our website with summaries from the panels and interviews with our Fellows, all of which you can find on the session page: www.SalzburgGlobal.org/go/540

You can also join in the conversation on Twitter with the hashtag [#SGSaging](https://twitter.com/SGSaging) and see all your fellow Fellows on Twitter via the list www.twitter.com/salzburgglobal/lists/SGS-540

We're updating both our Facebook page www.facebook.com/SalzburgGlobal and our Flickr stream www.flickr.com/SalzburgGlobal with photos from the session during this week and also after the session. (If you require non-watermarked images for your own publication, please let Louise know.) We will also be posting photos to Instagram www.instagram.com/SalzburgGlobal, and we encourage you to do so also, using the hashtag [#SGSaging](https://twitter.com/SGSaging).

