

# FACTORS INFLUENCING AGE MANAGEMENT IN ORGANISATIONS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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## Abstract

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This paper deals with the topical issues of age management and population ageing in the Czech Republic and Europe. The main objective of the paper is to evaluate the importance of individual visions of age management according to Ilmarinen (2006) and Cimbáľníková *et al.* (2012) in organisations in the Czech Republic and to identify factors that influence the implementation of individual visions in the organisation. The primary data (n = 549) was collected by means of a questionnaire technique. The research results have shown that the most important visions are as follows: (1) a fair attitude towards age, (2) knowledge about age issues and (3) a happy life and motivation. In order to evaluate the implementation of age management visions, a factor analysis was performed, on the basis of which two significant factors were identified: (1) organisational culture and (2) job performance and relationships. Based on the research results, organisations are recommended to focus on continuous analysis of their organisational culture, to adapt to changes in their environment, also to implement an effective employee performance appraisal system, and to explore the development of employees and relationships among generations of employees with emphasis on eliminating ageism.

Keywords: age management; demographic changes; visions; factors; organisation; survey; Czech Republic

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, demographic changes have had a significant impact on the age structure of employees in organisations (Smrčka and Arltová, 2012) and human resource management approaches that consider the productivity and inclusion of all employees, regardless of age (Schröder, Muller-Camen, and Flynn, 2014). The working-age population is falling (Gendron, 2011). Hence, the term ‘age management’ has emerged. The term age management is widely used in today’s developed societies, however, there is no consensus on its uniform definition so far (ICF Consulting Services, 2007). This is due to the fact that it spans several fields (Cimbáľníková, 2011). The importance of analysis of employee age groups and effective sharing of information on this issue is highlighted by Taylor and Walker (1994), Walker (2005), and Žnidaršič and Dimovski (2009). According to Cimbáľníková *et al.* (2012), the principles of age

management may be characterised by and divided into four basic preconditions:

1. to have good knowledge about the age structure of the organisation,
2. to place emphasis on fair attitudes towards ageing,
3. to take into account the individuality of every employee,
4. to place emphasis on diversity or to apply strategic thinking.

According to ICF Consulting Services (2007), the substance of this concept is defined at three levels, namely the socio-political, organisational, and individual. Kociánová (2012) also adds a fourth level, the collective level. The importance of the organisational level is emphasised by Principi, Fabbietti, and Lamura (2015), whose research has shown that age management has not yet been fully integrated into personnel management strategies within organisations. Based on these results,

employees possessing knowledge that younger employees do not possess still retire early. Strategies that take the age of employees into account are currently becoming a topical issue in organisations in general, not only in the Czech Republic, and according to the European Commission (2009), they are a crucial issue mainly in small and medium-sized enterprises (up to 50 employees), where employees remain for the greater part of their career. Deciding the direction of employee development within the organisation and the direction of the development of the organisation as a whole comprise the main tasks of an organisation's management. These will impact the setting of a suitable personnel strategy and a policy reflecting demographic development at the organisation level.

Cimbálníková *et al.* (2012) have reported that the tools of age management generally apply to a wide spectrum of activities related to working with people in organisations. Firstly, these areas include care for employees' health, as well as:

- restructuring of jobs (according to the needs of the employer and employees),
- development of the working environment (improvement of working conditions),
- adjustments to the organisation of work,
- ergonomics of work (searching for ergonomic solutions that reduce physical strain on employees),
- change management through employee suggestions,
- development of intergenerational cooperation (emphasis on the cooperation of all employees and ensuring the continuity of knowledge, as confirmed by Levy (2011) and Wang and Wang (2012)),
- support and promotion of the development of employee physical condition,
- development of personnel strategies while taking into account the need for age management (Urbancová and Hlavsa, 2014),
- support of job satisfaction (motivation), maintaining work well-being and suitable organisational climate.

The importance of the aforementioned individual activities is also documented by the research of Bertschek and Mayer (2009) and Göbel and Zwick (2012). Employee motivation has been stressed by Katcher and Snyder (2009) and Koubek (2015).

Ilmarinen (2006), based on a group of experts, has identified eight general visions of age management that logically affect each other. The visions are as follows:

5. good knowledge about age structures,
6. fair attitudes towards age,
7. good management that understands individuality and diversity,
8. good and operational age strategy,
9. good work ability, motivation, and the will to continue to work,

10. high level of competences (i.e. specific knowledge, abilities, skills, traits, motives, attitudes and values necessary to gain the required (superior) level of employee performance), continuous increase of competences of all age groups of employees, which is also noted by Manning (2010) or Kumaraswamy and Chitale (2012),

11. good work organisation and environment (which is also confirmed by Štorová (2012),

12. good life (concern for quality working lives of employees (Ramlall, 2004; Koubek, 2015)).

Organisational tools and procedures, which may better support the individual visions, are also proposed by Ilmarinen (2006). According to Ilmarinen (2006), good knowledge about age structures is possible only through evaluating the situation in the organisation with respect to the changing age structure, as well as examining the personnel strategy regarding the population ageing, and making plans to raise awareness of the age structure among managers and employees of the organisation together with holding training courses about age management for managers and senior executives. Taylor and Walker (1994), Walker (2005) and Žnidaršič and Dimovski (2009) also stress the importance of analysing employee age groups and effectively exchanging information on these issues.

According to Ilmarinen (2006), fair attitudes towards ageing can be achieved by surveying attitudes towards ageing or by identifying the existence of age discrimination/non-discrimination among the management (managers) and among employees of the organisation. The findings obtained and measures taken accordingly may help train managers about the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation related to employing employees over 50 and in creating best practice (Anderson, 2013), and enable the elimination of the existing negative experience in cooperation among the age groups of employees.

Good management takes into consideration the individuality of each age group of employees and the individual needs of employees, their life situations (Ilmarinen, 2006), their ability to work (an index of ability to work), their will to continue their work, their intrinsic motivation, and career management (Seibert, Kraimer, and Liden, 2001). Good management also places emphasis on continuous training of managers in developing their competences in the area of leadership with a focus on age differences and the development of good working relationships, and encourages cooperation and team spirit.

According to Ilmarinen (2006), Cimbálníková *et al.* (2012), and Štorová (2012), age management should be integrated into the existing personnel strategy, which must be in accordance with the organisational strategy, since management taking into account employees' age must be applied throughout the entire organisation, i.e. from the top

management down, which is also confirmed by Urbančová and Čermáková (2015). According to Herzberg, Mausner, and Bloch Snyderman (2004) and Koubek (2015), the functional organisational strategy should include a fair motivational system and compensation system for employees of all age groups. With respect to the age of employees, it is also necessary to plan and manage their careers, which is the responsibility of managers, to ensure ergonomics of workplaces and to create such conditions that take into account the needs of employees aged over 50 (Ilmarinen, 2006).

This topic is highly current because in 2011 in the Czech Republic about 16 % of people were over 65 (the size of the age group over 65 has more than doubled to 1.6 million people from 1950 to 2011 (Czech Statistical Office, 2014)) and in 2100 the proportion of people over 65 is expected to be one-third of the total Czech population (Czech Statistical Office, 2013). According to the Ministry of Health (2014), people at this age will be healthier than ever before thanks to more advanced medical care. In summary, therefore, forecasts of future demographic development indicate an increase in the intensity of the ageing process with the retirement of the baby boom generations. On the other hand, it is still difficult for people aged over 50 to find a job, there is negative ageing, and the present job design of numerous professions does not enable employees of advanced age or retirement age to work. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on the reorganisation of processes and the content of individual activities when employing employees over age 50 and on the effective use of flexible working, such as is the case of the Scandinavian countries.

The main objective of this paper is to evaluate the importance of individual visions of age management according to Ilmarinen (2006) and Cimbálníková *et al.* (2012) in organisations in the Czech Republic and to identify factors that influence the implementation of individual visions in the organisation. The paper is structured as follows. The first part of the paper focuses on the theoretical background and compares the results of the surveys conducted with outcomes presented in publications specialising in the given topic. The second part describes the methodology of the survey. The third part is dedicated to an evaluation of the outcomes of a quantitative survey. The fourth part discusses the results and the fifth part focuses on overall conclusions.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Factors influencing age management in organisations in the Czech Republic were monitored through a questionnaire survey conducted during the period from 05/2014 to 05/2015. The sample was based on the Albertina database of organisations. Albertina is a unique database containing important information about more than 2,700,000 organisations and organisations registered in the Czech Republic. The sample consisted of 549 organisations. The selection was targeted, based on pre-determined criteria (economic sector and organisation size according to headcount) so that the sample would be representative. In order to improve the quality of the results of the survey and to get a real picture of the current state of age management in the Czech Republic, only one respondent in a managerial position was asked to complete the questionnaire in each of

I: Structure of the sample in percentages

	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Total
<b>Economic sector</b>	19.9	20.2	59.9	100
	Small	Medium-sized	Large	Total
<b>Size</b>	53.2	25.5	21.3	100
	Czech	Foreign		Total
<b>Major participation</b>	78.1	21.9		100

Source: own survey

II: Number of employees in the age group over 50 in percentages

Number of employees in the age group over 50 (in %)	Number of organisations (in %)
0–5	31.3
6–10	20.6
11–15	12.4
16–20	12
21–30	11.7
31–40	4.7
41+	7.3

Source: own survey

the organisations. The structure of the sample is shown in Tab. I.

Given the subject matter, it was important to determine the percentage of employees over 50 in these organisations. Representatives of the participating organisations specified that they had at least one employee in the over 50 age group. The number of employees in the age group over 50 in these organisations is shown in Tab. II.

The data have been processed by means of absolute and relative frequencies using Microsoft Excel 2013 and IBM SPSS Statistics 22. The validity of the outputs and relationships obtained were supported by the tools of descriptive statistics and multivariate statistics, and especially factor analysis to determine significant factors influencing age management in organisations in the Czech Republic.

## RESULTS

The research results showed that age management is employed by only 29.3 % (161 organisations), 70.7 % of organisations have not implemented any age management initiatives at all. The most frequent reasons for this being the fact that they do not consider age management important (43 %), they do not have suitable employees – specialists who can carry out age management initiatives (39.4 %), and they do not have the time and finances required for this purpose (21.4 %). 28.1 % of respondents said that the culture of the organisation does not support age management (organisations with majority foreign capital). 23.2 % of the participating organisations that have not yet implemented age management intend to do so in the course of the following 5 years because they are aware of its need in the future.

The main disadvantages that became evident during and after the implementation of age management, as mentioned by the respondents, in particular include the demanding character of leading and managing an age-diverse group of employees, higher demands on communication in order to plan work, and higher financial and time demands.

### Age Management Visions Evaluation

Organisations that deal with age management have evaluated the individual visions of age management resulting from the research of Ilmarinen (2006) and complemented with the variables described by Cimbáľníková *et al.* (2012) based on results from Norway and Finland. A fair attitude towards age is considered the most important vision. This means that organisation managers and executives have a fair attitude towards ageing employees and their knowledge and skills are also utilised.

The second most important vision is knowledge about age issues, which means that the people responsible for making decisions in the organisation are aware of problems related to the future of workforce, such as the ageing of employees, early retirement, and the shortage of young employees. A happy life, i.e. motivation, appreciation, professional well-being, and the quality and improvement of older employees' lives has been identified as the third most important vision. The third vision is also based on enabling employees to retire with dignity. Detailed results of the evaluation of age management visions by organisations addressing age management are presented in Tab. III.

The organisations ranked age strategy as part of personal development plans and organisation policy as the least important vision of age management. The representatives of these

III: Evaluation of the age management visions in percentages

Age management visions	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Knowledge about the age issues	42.86	49.69	1.24	5.59	0.62
Fair attitudes towards age	50.93	44.72	0.62	3.11	0.62
The good management that understands individuality and diversity	38.51	49.69	4.97	5.59	1.24
Good and operational age strategy	36.02	49.69	8.70	4.35	1.24
Personal working plans and organisation policy in accordance with the age strategy	16.15	36.65	24.22	22.36	0.62
Good work ability, motivation and the will to continue to work	31.06	47.20	14.91	6.21	0.62
High level of competences	33.54	49.07	9.32	7.45	0.62
Good work organisation and environment	26.71	57.76	3.73	10.56	1.24
Happy life and motivation	42.86	36.65	11.80	5.59	3.11

Source: own survey

organisations reported that they primarily plan and manage their employees' careers by their competences, which means non-discrimination of older employees in terms of promotion, i.e. not because they are already too old for the position, rejecting younger employees for senior positions, or being unwilling to manage their careers due to reaching an imaginary age limit. They therefore identified this vision as rather insignificant. In total 47.8 % of the organisations stated that the shortage of qualified people in the given field is the most significant downside and the greatest obstacle to implementing the visions of age management. 42.9 % of organisations mentioned financial reasons, 27.3 % stated organisational reasons, and 17.4 % considered organisation management to be the problem. Other risk factors for implementing the visions of age management included instability of the current industry, a turbulent environment, and reduced decision-making ability of management.

### Factor Analysis Results

A factor analysis was performed within the surveyed organisations in order to evaluate the visions influencing age management. The factor analysis used variables identified based on

theoretical knowledge. The calculated values in the factor analysis express the extent to which a new variable correlates with the original variables. In other words, the higher the value of the variance of the found factor is, the larger the group of responses (variables entering the analysis) the factor collects, representing them according to their common attributes, similarities, and behaviour. These are the visions influencing the implementation of age management. Based on the evaluation of the calculated data, two important factors satisfying the criteria laid down in accordance with the methodology have been identified from the evaluation of the questionnaire survey. Tab. IV shows the variability of the individual examined variables by percentage and their grand total.

The variance in factor 1 can be considered most significant (33.788 %). Overall these two identified variables explain 46.887 % of the sample behaviour or the selection of resulting attributes that satisfy the conditions stipulated by Anderson (2009). The factor analysis results of the questionnaire survey are given in Tab. V.

The first factor proves the importance of internal organisational environment. Such organisations place emphasis on creating a suitable environment

V: Variance explained by factors

Factor	Variance	% of variance	Cumulative %
<b>Factor 1</b>	3.041	33.788	33.788
<b>Factor 2</b>	1.179	13.099	46.887

Source: own survey

IV: Resulting factors

Variable	Factor 1	Factor 2
<b>Knowledge about the age issues</b>	<b>0.652</b>	0.105
<b>Fair attitudes towards age</b>	<b>0.415</b>	0.560
<b>The good management that understands individuality and diversity</b>	<b>0.596</b>	0.015
<b>Good and operational age strategy</b>	<b>0.737</b>	0.232
<b>Personal working plans and organisation policy in accordance with the age strategy</b>	<b>0.605</b>	0.131
<b>Good work ability, motivation and the will to continue to work</b>	0.069	<b>0.664</b>
<b>High level of competences</b>	<b>0.503</b>	0.213
<b>Good work organisation and environment</b>	0.146	<b>0.734</b>
<b>Happy life and motivation</b>	0.138	<b>0.798</b>
<b>% of variance</b>	33.788	13.099
<b>Name of the factor</b>	<b>Organisational culture</b>	<b>Job performance and relationships</b>

Source: own survey



that supports the implementation of age management and thus generates a positive response from employees. Organisations endeavour to raise awareness of the given area, managers are informed about the issues and are interested in promoting it (0.596), organisations place emphasis on employee development at every age (0.503), career plans for all employees (0.605) and age strategies are developed (0.737). The coefficients of the found factors range from 0.415 to 0.737, which represents a relatively high quality of the coefficients according to Anderson (2009). Lastly, ageism and any improper organisational climate must be eliminated at the organisational level. The first factor can be called 'organisational culture' and is supported by the formulated strategic goals of the organisation because it brings together the most important factors which the organisation, or more precisely the management, must promote.

The second factor, termed 'job performance and relationships,' includes 3 variables directly influenced by the individual employees of organisations. A high quality coefficient is assigned to work organisation and environment, to the use of flexible working (0.734), which supports employees' satisfaction and reduces staff turnover (0.798), and to the support of employees' ability to work by age, which effectively stimulates and increases motivation even of older and more experienced employees and supports collaboration (0.664). These organisations first and foremost take into account the individuality of a person, who is important to the organisation operation in age management, and subsequently adjust organisational matters. The implementation of age management in general then helps improve the organisation's prestige not only in the eyes of employees but also in the eyes of customers, suppliers, etc., and helps build an employer brand.

## DISCUSSION

According to Turek and Perek-Bialas (2013), there is still a negative influence of age-related stereotypes on the labour market situation of older employees, which is also confirmed by Isopahkala-Bouret (2015). Although employees in the age category of over 50 are referred to as more stable and more loyal to the organisation, they support the interests of the organisation and their goals are not usually associated with their own ambitions or career. The experienced employee's relationship to and functioning in their profession may take varied forms, from excessive work effort to burnout, to loss of confidence in their own abilities and the feeling of meaningfulness of their own work. The results of some studies (Bejtkovský, 2012; Cimbáľníková *et al.*, 2012; Urbancová and Čermáková, 2015) indicate increasing motivation of older employees; other studies (Cimbáľníková *et al.*, 2012) indicate declining motivation with age, or distrust of further training related to low self-evaluation (Vroom,

1990). Work motivation and adaptation to changes at work have a very individual character and personal factors have a key influence as well. This mainly applies to self-evaluation, confidence in one's own competences, or expectations in relation to another life path (Boockmann and Zwick, 2004; Cimbáľníková *et al.*, 2012; Ng and Law, 2014).

According to Vnoučková (2013), in order to retain quality employees, not only in the age group of over 50, it is necessary to focus on reducing dissatisfaction, to eliminate factors/causes of dissatisfaction, and to boost the motivation of all age groups of employees. From a human resource management perspective, the challenge is to ensure that age management issues are managed in the most effective way (Furunes, Mykletun, and Solem, 2011). Based on the aforementioned and comparison of the opinions of the individual authors dealing with age management, one can summarise that age management must be taken into account in many personnel activities, most particularly:

- staff recruitment (already in the selection process), which is stressed by Naegel and Walker (2006), or in specific forms of job interviews for different age groups (Goudswaard and De Nanteuil (2000)),
- training, development, and lifelong learning (Huang and Shih, 2011; Štorová, 2012; Cimbáľníková *et al.*, 2012),
- career planning and management (Hornstein, 2001; Bozionelos, 2006), the possibility of qualification growth at every age,
- social development of employees, i.e. organisation of working hours (make the most of flexible working hours) (CIPD, 2005; Galea, Houkes, and De Rijk, 2014), health prevention and protection and ergonomics of working environment,
- mobility management (staff redeployment) (Collings, 2014),
- retirement planning (Beazley, Boenisch, and Hardan, 2002; Levy, 2011).

Management of human resources in the organisation must be approached comprehensively and must try to respect the specifics of different employees age groups (Naegel and Walker, 2006). According to Walker (2005), Bejtkovský (2012) and Cimbáľníková *et al.* (2012), not all employee age groups can be approached in the same manner.

Equality of employees of different ages in organisations, collaboration among generations of employees, and support of lifelong learning are nowadays becoming more and more important in organisations. However, Pillinger (2008) in keeping with Morschhäuser and Sochert (2006), Levy (2011) and Wang and Wang (2012) points out that the individual tools of age management will work only if the organisational culture and the implementation of work habits accept, respect, and utilize the contribution and talent of all employees to the benefit of the entire organisation and each employee individually.

Given the demographic situation in the Czech Republic and Europe, compared to other countries in the European Union (EU), the Czech Republic is characterised over the long term by a lower level of unemployment, but unfortunately with the minimum number of people working part-time (5.8 %, for example; it is nearly 50 % in the Netherlands); it is further characterised by a dominant share of industry and, compared to most EU countries, by a higher unemployment rate for women compared to men (Eurostat, 2016). This situation, however, will turbulently change with demographic development and it is necessary that the management of organisations in the Czech Republic and the EU are prepared for changes in the labour market.

The policy for preparing for an ageing population as stipulated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2015) should respond to two fundamental challenges: to integrate older persons into economic and social development, and to create an age-inclusive society. These challenges emphasise the importance of adapting employment policies, retirement policies, and other policies and services to ongoing social and demographic changes. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2015) emphasises that the primary principles of the policy of preparing for aging include an emphasis on human rights, respecting gender aspects of ageing issues, a lifelong approach to ageing and health, an emphasis on family and inter-generational relationships, the creation of measures for studying submitted findings and relevant statistical data, a special focus on minorities, and last but not least, respect for differences between rural and urban communities (National Action Plan for Positive Ageing for the period of 2013 to 2017, as amended). The basic framework of this National Action Plan is the subsequent enforcement of upholding and protecting the human rights of all seniors and

its focus is a complex approach to addressing the issues of ageing population, the coordination and integration of individual strategies of the departments in the area of approaches to ageing, and the creation of common priorities of all accepted measures (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2015).

The long-term projection of public data associated with the ageing population nonetheless also indicates that ageing populations also represent a challenge for the public finances of the EU. Total age-related public expenditures are projected to increase by 1.4 p.p. of GDP between 2013 and 2060 in the EU, to reach 27 % in 2060, with large differences across countries. Excluding unemployment benefits (strictly-age-related expenditure), an increase of 1.8 p.p. of GDP between 2013 and 2060 is projected in the EU, to reach 26.3 % in 2060. The European Commission (2015) has added that taking into account potentially more adverse macroeconomic assumptions, such as the TFP risk scenario, strictly ageing-related public expenditures could increase by 2.1 p.p. of GDP between 2013 and 2060.

It can be stated that the diversity across member states is very large, depending on the degree and timing of population ageing, the specific features of national pension systems and, notably, countries' progress with structural reforms. In most countries, recent pension reforms have had a visible positive impact by containing public expenditure dynamics. Pension reforms have also contributed to an increase in the effective retirement age and labour input as a result. The scale of reforms in some member states, however, is still insufficient to curb the increase in public pension expenditure (European Commission, 2015). According to the aforementioned, the situation in area of aging is very topical and crucial for every organisation and for society as a whole.

## CONCLUSION

Statistics show that the Czech economy will soon be faced not only with the problems of seeking alternative resources and new markets but also with the impact of ongoing demographic changes, with a new form of competition, and with a lack of employees possessing the necessary competences. Age management at the organisational level is of extraordinary importance and its symptoms may be observed wherever organisations do not address this issue in an integrated manner through organisation operations and strategy. At the level of organisations, this particularly concerns the considerable absence of experience dependent on long-time accumulation that is transferable and usable in the world of modern technologies and the progressive systems of the organisation. Age management also means a considerable social burden in order to maintain a minimum standard of living for the unemployed in the age category of over 50 and, at the same time, a certain integral part of activities that distinguish the organisation from the capacities of highly expensive, specialized, highly qualified, dynamic and creatively oriented young people. The research shows it to be indisputable that the human element of employees aged over 50 and their job performance can be decisive factors in the competitiveness of organisations in particular phases of the economic cycle, associated with the limited supply of younger employees.

This paper has therefore addressed the evaluation of the significance of individual visions when implementing age management at the organisational level. Two main factors, namely 'organisational culture' and 'job performance and relationships', which the managements of organisations must

focus on, have been identified within the research. The values of individual variables within factors ranged from 0.415 to 0.798, which is medium to strong dependence.

The theoretical contribution of this paper is the identification of factors influencing effective implementation of age management at the organisational level and their designation. The presentation of research results ( $n = 549$ ) and the suggestion of ways in which the managements of organisations should support age management at the organisational level can be regarded as the practical contribution of the paper. The theme of the paper is currently highly topical, and therefore further research in this area is expected, since employing the group aged over 50 will help to develop not only individuals but also organisations and society as a whole.

The limits of this paper consist of its relatively narrow focus at the organisational level and its selection sample. The sample of organisations analysed is sufficient to obtain data and enables projection to the general situation in the area of age management in the Czech Republic (i.e. projection from the sample group), not however the generalisation of results to all organisations in the Czech Republic (the general population). This is nonetheless a problem of the majority of studies conducted, including the studies by Ilmarinen (2006), Cimbáľníková *et al.* (2012) and others.

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