

Meet the speakers



Adelina Comas

Adelina Comas Herrera is the Director of the Global Observatory on Long-Term Care and a researcher at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

She is an economist by training, with extensive experience in care needs projection models, future expenditure estimates, and studies on different care financing models. She was co-director of the STRiDE project (Strengthening Responses to Dementia in Seven Middle-Income Countries) and is currently working on a project to identify the mechanisms contributing to inequities in access to services and support for people with dementia and their caregivers.



Agustín Martínez Molina

Agustín Martínez Molina is a professor in the area of Methodology of Behavioral Sciences at the Faculty of Psychology of the Autonomous University of Madrid. He has over 15 years of national and international teaching and research experience.

He has led major research projects in psychometrics and data modeling (e.g., basic cognitive processes, intelligence, decision-making, neuroimaging). He was the founder of the Chilean Association of Methodology (ACMME) and is currently the General Coordinator of Studies at the Institute for Older Adults and Social Services (IMSERSO).

With more than 50 indexed publications, he has made a significant impact on the scientific community, participating in multiple funded projects and advising on social program evaluation initiatives. His work combines a rigorous methodological approach with practical applications to improve quality of life.



Amaia Antxustegi

Born in 1978 in the Flemish town of Knokke-Heist, she grew up in Lekeitio, where she currently resides.

She studied Economic Law at the University of Deusto and, in 2006, joined the Provincial Council of Bizkaia as a General Administrative Technician, working in the Women and Family Service until 2015.

From 2007 to 2021, she served as a councillor on the Lekeitio Town Council, spending the last six years as deputy mayor. During this time, she was responsible for Social Policies, Women and Equality, Citizen Relations, Internal Municipal Organisation, and Human Resources.

In March 2021, she was appointed Provincial Councillor for Sustainability and the Natural Environment. Since July 2023, she has served as Provincial Councillor for Social Action.



Danel Alberdi

Danel Alberdi is an expert in organizational transformation, participation, and leadership in complex environments. With a career that combines strategic consulting, university teaching, and high-impact project management, he has worked with institutions, companies, and social organizations to drive innovative models of collaboration and change.

Currently, he coordinates BizkaiaGara, the participation and volunteer agency of Bizkaia, where he leads strategies to strengthen the region's social and business fabric. Additionally, he heads the consultancy firm Coach and Play, specializing in organizational change, leadership, and talent management, and collaborates as a lecturer at Mondragon University and the University of the Basque Country.

His approach is based on integrating social innovation methodologies, adaptive leadership, and territorial strategy to generate sustainable and effective change. He firmly believes in the power of networks, collective intelligence, and participation as key elements in building more resilient organizations and communities prepared for the future.



Félix Linares

Félix Linares (Bilbao, 1947) is one of the most veteran and well-known journalists in Euskadi. He has had a long career as a journalist and film critic. For 28 years, he was the host of *La noche de*, a film-focused program on ETB2.

Félix has had an extensive professional career, working at Radio Popular from 1966 to 1984, the year he joined Radio Euskadi. Since then, his career has been closely linked to cultural and review programs such as *Pompas de papel* and *Iflandia*.

Although he has stepped down as the host of *La noche de*..., Linares remains active through collaborations with Radio Euskadi, his professional home for nearly forty years. He also continues to share his insights through his YouTube channel, where he posts videos reviewing newly released films, TV series, comics, and books.



Francesco Giusti

Dr. Francesco Giusti has a master's degree in political science and a PhD in History of International Relations from the University of Florence. He worked for more than 20 years as epidemiologist and statistician in research institutes in Italy and Belgium, with a focus on cancer treatment and survival data.

At the Commission he worked for six years at the Joint Research Centre on the establishment of the European Cancer Information System. In 2024 he joined the Social Protection Unit of the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.

He works as a Policy Officer in the long-term care team, focusing on data/statistical needs, in particular in relationship to the monitoring framework of the Council Recommendation on affordable high-quality long-term care.



Ivan Bautmans

Ivan Bautmans is MSc Physiotherapy, MSc Manual Therapy and PhD Medical Sciences, and an expert in biogerontological research: physical training of older persons, sarcopenia and inflammation. His work on muscle fatigue in frailty was awarded by 7 scientific prizes among which the Collen-Francqui Chair 2024-25 and the 3 most prestigious Belgian gerontology awards (2013 King Baudouin Foundation's PRIZE MARIE-THÉRÈSE DE LAVA; 2009 DE COOMAN PRIZE; 2010 BORGERHOFF PRIZE). He obtained funding from FWO, VUB, Willy Gepts Fund, EU (FP7, AAL), WCF (The Netherlands) and sponsored clinical trials. Ivan is full-time appointed as tenured full professor (Gewoon Hoogleraar) at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) where he is head of the Gerontology department, the Frailty & Resilience in Ageing research unit (<https://fria.research.vub.be>) and the Vitality research group.

He coordinates an Interdisciplinary Research Program @VUB on Active and Healthy Ageing, and a Strategic Growth Research Program @VUB on the anti-inflammatory effects of exercise in the aged. At the VUB he is coordinator of the Research Master of Gerontological Sciences (www.vub.ac.be/en/study/research-master-gerontological-sciences) where he gives lectures on healthy ageing & research methodology. He is also board member (President elect in 2013-2015) of the Belgian Society for Gerontology & Geriatrics (www.geriatrie.be), founding board member of the Belgian Ageing Muscle Society (www.ageingmuscle.be) and co-chair of the Sarcopenia Special Interest Group of the European Geriatric Medicine Society (www.eugms.org). At SOMT University of Physiotherapy (Amersfoort, The Netherlands) he is scientific advisor and PI of the Fatigue Resistance AMersfoort (FRAME) study and the AMersfoort COhort study on functional decline, Healthy ageing & Frailty (AMCOHF) study. At SOMT he gives lectures on geriatric rehabilitation and is responsible for the Master Thesis of the students in Geriatric Physiotherapy.

He has extensive collaboration with the World Health Organisation (WHO) as leader of an expert group on Vitality Capacity within the WHO Healthy Ageing framework.



Jotheeswaran Thiyagarajan

Dr Jotheeswaran Amuthavalli Thiyagarajan is a Technical Officer (Epidemiologist) in the Ageing and Health Unit at WHO Headquarters. In August 2015, He joined WHO and he is currently leading three initiatives for the World Health Organization (WHO). These include efforts to monitor and evaluate the progress and impact of the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing in 194 countries, developing a public health strategy to promote bone health and prevent fractures in older persons, and implementing the WHO Global Ageing Population Survey.

Jotheeswaran is the Secretariat for the WHO Technical Advisory Group for Measurement of Healthy Ageing (TAG4MHA) and the UN Steering Committee for Monitoring Healthy Ageing. Through these groups, WHO sets measurement agenda and global standards for measuring health and well-being of older persons. He also supervises two WHO Collaborating Centres: WHO Collaborating Center for Epidemiology of Musculoskeletal Conditions and Ageing at University of Liege, Belgium and WHO Collaborating Center for Longitudinal Studies on Ageing at University of Dublin, Ireland.

Jotheeswaran, in collaboration with several academic partners, leads research on validating WHO's new concept of healthy ageing, mainly intrinsic capacity and functional ability. He also leads the effort to harmonise data from all ongoing national surveys on ageing and health to produce global health estimates on older persons' health state and care needs. He also manages several experts working groups of WHO: WHO Bone Health Expert Working Group, WHO working group on quality of dying and death, WHO Working Group on Vitality Capacity, WHO Working Group on Locomotor Capacity, WHO Working Group on Cognitive Capacity and WHO Working Group on Psychological Capacity.

Jotheeswaran's expertise in ageing epidemiology, coupled with skills in statistical modelling, health systems research, systematic reviews, global health estimates, and knowledge transfer, positions him as an asset in advancing policy development in ageing and health.



Marian Gerrikabeitia

Director, audiovisual producer, and journalist specializing in culture. She has worked as a radio host, presenter, scriptwriter, producer, or director in radio and television, including Cadena SER, Radio Euskadi, Onda Cero, Euskal Telebista, TVE, and Telecinco.

Her musical training has been essential in approaching other artistic disciplines. She has released several albums with Punta Galea (Sony) and Delito (Polygram) and has composed and collaborated on soundtracks for dance and film productions alongside Ramón Barea, Juan Ma Bajo Ulloa, Asier Zabaleta, Blanca Arrieta, Idoia Zabaleta, and John Scott, among others.

As a Bilbao Arte grant recipient, she creates video dance pieces, collaborates with choreographers, and develops various short contemporary dance works. Her professional career is driven by creative challenges and interdisciplinary projects, often with a social focus.

Recently, she has concentrated on documentary filmmaking, directing and producing:

¿A dónde Vamos? (Tu & Yo Producciones, 2018) – Winner of the Tomás Belzunegui Award for redefining the role of older adults; Eten Barik Joten (Panorama, ETB 1, 2021); Apaiz Kartzela (Maluta Films, 2021); Vosotros tenéis los relojes... (Tu & Yo Producciones, 2022); Ellas Primero – Pioneers of Basque Gastronomy (Tu & Yo Producciones, Azaroa Films, ETB, 2023).

In 2022, she founded and directed the Silver Film Festival—an international festival of film and thought, the only one of its kind in Euskadi—aimed at highlighting and giving voice to a new way of understanding aging in our society.



Maria Teresa Sancho Castiello

Civil servant in IMSERSO for 30 years, she has participated in the drafting process of Law on the Promotion of Personal Autonomy and Care for Dependent Persons (2006) and also she has coordinated, in collaboration with Higher Council on Scientific Research, the platform “portalmayores” from 2000 to 2008 and the Ageing Observatory.

Vice President of SEGG (Spanish Society for Geriatrics and Gerontology) during that period.

Since 2008 she worked for Matía Foundation as Scientific Director of its Institute. She collaborates with international organizations and public sector in long-term care and its actual transformation process projects. Nowadays, she is Imsero's General Director.

She has numerous publications in gerontological planification field as well as in long-term care.

Recently she has been recognized by United Nations as one of 50 global leaders who has contributed the most to the transformation of our society in ageing better: <https://www.decadeofhealthyageing.org/topics-initiatives/other-initiatives/healthy-ageing-50>.



Naiara Artaza

Naiara Artaza is the Head of the Nagusi Intelligence Center (NIC) and an adviser for social care strategic projects at the Cabinet Office of the Government of Biscay. With over 25 years of experience in health and social care systems, Naiara has extensive expertise in healthcare and social care management and policy reform.

She holds a Master of Science (MSc) in Health Economics, Policy, and Management from the London School of Economics (LSE), a certificate in Public Health from the University of California, Berkeley, a bachelor's degree in Law, and a Specialist Diploma in Economics from Deusto University.

NIC is dedicated to fostering a new sector focused on aging, health, and long-term care. It serves as a platform for public-private collaboration, aiming to turn the challenges of an aging population into opportunities for economic and social development.

Expertise:

Long-Term Care (LTC) Policy; LTC Reforms; Governance and Organization of LTC Systems; Health and Social Care Integration/Coordination; Silver Economy Strategic Design; Economics of Aging



Natasha Azzopardi-Muscat

Dr Natasha Azzopardi-Muscat is a medical doctor, a specialist in public health, and the author of several publications in public health and European health policy.

Following her qualification as a medical doctor from the University of Malta in 1995, Dr Azzopardi-Muscat worked in various areas in the health sector in Malta, including maternal and child health, mental health, and primary care. Her transdisciplinary research bridging health policy, European studies and small states studies led to her PhD entitled “The Europeanisation of health systems: a small state perspective”.

Since 1999, Natasha has been a resident academic at the University of Malta, teaching in the department of health services management and public health. In 2003, she completed her specialization in public health medicine and obtained her membership in the Faculty of Public Health of the United Kingdom. Between 2001 and 2013, she occupied various senior positions in the Ministry of Health in Malta, including that of Chief Medical Officer.

Before joining WHO, Dr Azzopardi-Muscat served as President of the European Public Health Association (EUPHA) from 2016 to 2020, where she was actively involved in health advocacy at the European level.

Dr Azzopardi-Muscat is married to Dr Conrad Azzopardi, a practicing physician, and has 3 children.



Raquel Castelo Branco

Raquel Castelo Branco is the Head of the Municipal Department for Social Cohesion at the Porto City Council. She holds a degree in Food Engineering from the School of Biotechnology at the Catholic University of Porto, as well as an MBA in Business Management and Administration from Lusíada University of Porto.

Raquel is President of Honour of the International Association ‘Réseau Cité des Métiers’, having served as President from 2014 to 2020. She has also been a member of the Board of Directors of the Porto Social Foundation, where she took on the role of Executive Director, and she served on the Board of Directors of the Porto Social Innovation Centre. In addition, she has held the position of Vice-Chairman of the Board of Culturporto, also acting as Executive Director.

Raquel has experience as a lecturer at the Instituto Superior de Ciências da Saúde and as a trainer at the Catholic University of Porto. She has been a speaker at numerous national and international conferences, seminars, and congresses.



Rosanna Carceller

Journalist with a degree from the Autonomous University of Barcelona. Coordinator of the Longevity section at La Vanguardia since February 2024 and contributor to CENIE (International Center on Aging).

Director and host of the podcast La revolució sexual on RAC1 (Grupo Godó radio) since 2020. Specialized in longevity, healthy aging, health, well-being, psychology, and sexuality. Passionate about social trends and addicted to storytelling, both collective and individual.



Sarah Harper

Sarah is the Clore Professor of Gerontology at the University of Oxford, a Fellow at University College, and Director of the Oxford Institute of Population Ageing. She was appointed a CBE in 2018 for services to Demography.

She has advised the UK government on ageing policies, chaired the UK Foresight Review on Ageing Populations, and contributed to UN and European demographic projects.

Her research focuses on fertility decline, longevity, and the social and environmental impacts of population change, with key work on ageing, eldercare in China, and fertility trends in sub-Saharan Africa. She has served on advisory boards for the Royal Society, Wellcome Trust, and Natural England and is a founding editor of the Journal of Population Ageing.

Her books include *How Population Change Will Transform Our World* (OUP, 2016/2019), and forthcoming works on ageing and environmental change.

Previously, she was a professor at the University of Chicago, worked as a BBC journalist, and founded the Oxford Institute of Population Ageing with NIH funding.



Stefania Ilinca

Dr. Stefania Ilinca is Technical Officer for long-term care with the WHO Regional Office for Europe, a Senior Atlantic Fellow for Equity in Brain Health and a Salzburg Global Seminar fellow. She has extensive experience working at the interface between policy and research, dividing her time between policy advice, technical support, applied research and advocacy efforts.

At WHO Europe, her portfolio covers the transformation of long-term care ecosystems, informed by equity, sustainability and demographic change concerns, with particular attention to strengthening care delivery for people with complex needs, supporting integrated care models, promoting quality in long-term care delivery and leveraging digital and social innovations.



Thiago Hérick de Sá

Thiago Hérick de Sá holds a degree in Sports Science, and Masters and PhD degrees in Public Health. He started his career as a physical educator, working with older people at hospitals, primary care settings and households in Brazil. From 2010, Thiago worked as a researcher in Brazil and in the UK, with a track record of scientific publications in high-impact journals.

Thiago joined WHO in 2017 to support the work around urban, transport and health, including the development of WHO's Urban Health Research Agenda (2022), the Sourcebook on Integrating Health in Urban and Territorial Planning (2020) and the adaptation for global use of the HEAT tool (2021).

In 2022, Thiago joined the Department of Social Determinants of Health to lead the work on Age-friendly environments, including the coordination of WHO's Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities, the development of the guide for National Programs of Age-friendly Cities and Communities and the technical support on age-friendly environments to WHO Member States.



Vânia de la Fuente-Núñez

She was born in 1978 in the Flemish town of Knokke-Heist and grew up in Lekeitio, where she currently resides.

She studied Economic Law at the University of Deusto. In 2006, she secured a position as a General Administrative Technician at the Provincial Council of Bizkaia, working in the Women's and Family Service until 2015.

From 2007 to 2021, she served as a councilor in the Lekeitio City Council, spending the last six years as Deputy Mayor and Head of Social Policies, Women and Equality, Citizen Relations, Internal Municipal Organization, and Human Resources.

In March 2021, she was appointed Provincial Deputy for Sustainability and the Natural Environment, and since July 2023, she has served as the Provincial Deputy for Social Action.



Yongjie Yon

Dr. Yongjie Yon is a Technical lead for the Ageing and Health unit at the WHO Regional Office for Europe in Copenhagen, Denmark. Dr. Yon was a Doctoral Fellow with the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and received his PhD in Gerontology from the University of Southern California, United States. Prior to WHO, Dr. Yon worked for the Government of Canada on ageing policies.

