GENERATIONAL CHANGE AND DIGITALIZATION IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT: IMPLICATIONS FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

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Abstract

Social policy in the European context is facing dynamic changes related to demographic developments, growing regional inequalities, and pressure on fiscal sustainability. In this environment, project management and grant management are becoming key tools for implementing social programs and initiatives financed from public and European sources. Generational change in the management of these projects brings different approaches to the use of technology, team leadership, and work values. While the older generation builds on stability and institutional experience, the younger generation emphasizes digitalization, agility, and the integration of artificial intelligence. This dynamic creates space for innovation but also the risk of conflict and digital exclusion. This paper analyzes how generational diversity, technological innovation, and value preferences can be combined to enhance the effectiveness and transparency of project management in social policy. It discusses the opportunities and limitations of digitizing grant management and the role of AI in increasing the resilience and inclusiveness of project teams. The results show that a suitable balance between tradition and innovation can contribute to greater competitiveness of regions and the long-term sustainability of social systems.

Keywords: Generational Change in Project Management, Digitalization and Artificial Intelligence, Social Policy and Public Administration, Sustainability and Inclusion, Regional Development and Competitiveness

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Introduction

The issues of generational change and digitalization in project management are currently gaining extraordinary importance. The significance of generational change and digitalization is evident not only at the level of individual organizations but also on a broader regional and international scale. In Central Europe, where projects often depend on co-financing from EU funds, issues of effective project management are becoming key to regional competitiveness (European Commission, 2024). A comparative view of the social policies of different regions shows that similar challenges–an ageing population, public finance imbalances, and pressure for inclusion–require tailored approaches that reflect cultural and institutional specificities. This context makes it possible to link knowledge and strengthen regional adaptability to global changes and challenges.

One of the greatest challenges of our time is the ageing population and the associated growth in the number of senior citizens, which significantly affects the sustainability of pension and healthcare systems and puts pressure on fiscal stability. Along with this trend, there is growing demand for social services and support for marginalised groups, including low-income individuals, people with disabilities, and seniors, who are most at risk of social exclusion–which significantly deteriorated compared to the previous year (ČTK, 2025). These phenomena are particularly evident at the regional level, where there is a clear imbalance between urban centres and rural areas in terms of access to services and modern infrastructure.

The importance of project management in this context is essential. Projects financed from national and European sources are a key mechanism for responding to the above-mentioned socio-political challenges while strengthening inclusive and sustainable regional development. However, the effectiveness of these projects is largely dependent on generational factors and the ability of organizations to adapt to digitalization (European Commission, 2024). The older generation brings stability, experience, and

institutional memory to project management, while the younger generation brings dynamism, a focus on flexibility, and a natural use of digital tools. However, several clashes of intergenerational opinions and conflicts also emerge. It is precisely the interconnection and synchronization of these two approaches that can create more resilient and effective project management systems.

The research gap lies in the relative lack of studies that simultaneously reflect generational change, the digitalization of project management, and their direct impact on regional development and the sustainability of social programmes. While individual aspects are examined in detail in the professional literature, a systematic understanding of their interrelationships and implications for project management practice at the regional level remains insufficiently developed. Previous research on generational change in organizations highlights both the opportunities and tensions arising from intergenerational collaboration.

Studies in the field of project management (e.g., Bondarouk and Oivas-Lujan, 2014; Sak and Kolesárová, 2012) point out that digital transformation is reshaping the way projects are planned, implemented, and evaluated. Established methodologies such as PMI's PMBOK or PRINCE2 emphasize structured planning, risk management, and quality control, whereas agile and hybrid approaches promoted by younger generations highlight adaptability, iteration, and intensive use of digital platforms. The interplay of these approaches becomes particularly relevant in projects co-financed from European funds, where strict procedural compliance must coexist with innovation and flexibility.

At the same time, regional policy literature emphasizes the importance of human capital, institutional adaptability, and technological readiness as critical factors for competitiveness (European Commission, 2024). Despite this, few studies systematically integrate generational dynamics, digitalization processes, and regional development strategies into a single analytical framework. This paper therefore aims to contribute to filling this gap by analysing the interaction of these factors in the Czech Republic.

The aim of this paper is to analyse how generational differences in approaches to project management and digitalization are reflected in the ability of regions to face the socio-political challenges associated with an ageing population and the increasing demands for fiscal sustainability. The basic research question is therefore:

- How can generational change and digitalization contribute to more effective and sustainable project management at the regional level?

Generational Change and Digitalization in the Context of Regional Development

Generational change and digitalization are key factors influencing the ability of regions and entities to develop sustainably and respond to changing economic and social environments. The gradual replacement of the workforce brings not only new skills and approaches to regions but also the dynamism needed for local economies and communities to adapt to new challenges. The older generation ensures the transfer of experience, deeper knowledge of the legal framework, and an approach based on procedures and control, while the younger generation brings innovative ways of working, digital skills, and openness to technological change (Sak and Kolesárová, 2012). The combination of these approaches is essential for building sustainable regional development that considers economic efficiency, social cohesion, and environmental aspects.

Digitalization supports regional development by increasing productivity, streamlining processes, and connecting local economies to wider market areas. As a result of technological development, digitalization enables the improvement of new industries, the use of local resources, and the provision of services even in less accessible areas, thereby contributing to the reduction of spatial inequalities. At the same time, it supports education and human capital development, which is a key area for the long-term sustainability of the workforce and the socio-economic adaptability of regions (Bondarouk and Oivas-Lujan, 2014).

The interaction between generational change and digitalization is crucial for sustainable development. It enables the effective combination of experience and innovation. The transfer of knowledge from the older generation, together with the digital skills of younger workers, creates a synergistic relationship that increases the ability of regions to adapt to technological change, supports local businesses, and strengthens innovation capacities that may become a competitive advantage for the region in the future, both nationally and internationally. It is therefore essential for regional policy to support initiatives that connect generations, develop digital skills, and create attractive conditions for retaining and attracting young people to all sectors, thus ensuring the stability and long-term sustainability of regional development.

The Concept of Generational Change

Generational change in jobs and positions is a significant factor influencing the effectiveness and management of teams, especially in project management and modern forms of organization. This process is often perceived as the replacement of older workers with younger ones. However, it is a deeper process of exchanging experience and knowledge arising from different views on work values and the acceptance of new innovations. Each generation involved in the functioning of an organization is influenced by the environment in which it grew up, which shapes its work ethic and views on leadership and cooperation.

Generations thus differ in many areas, particularly in their work values, approach to technology, forms of communication, and willingness to accept innovative measures. These differences can lead both to serious conflicts and to opportunities for intergenerational synergy.

The most common division distinguishes Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z.

Baby Boomers, who grew up before the advent of digitalization, represent a generation strongly based on traditional values. Their approach to work reflects a high level of loyalty to their employer, an emphasis on stability, and a conscientious approach. They greatly prefer personal contact and formal communication, favouring face-to-face meetings and phone calls over quick digital messages (Peart, 2024). They are the bearers of institutional memory, and their experience forms a solid foundation for the sustainability and stability of organisations. However, older workers can be sceptical of rapid change and new digital innovations, which may slow down the implementation of innovative practices. This hesitation is often caused by a lack of trust in the reliability and efficiency of new technologies (Sak and Kolesárová, 2012). Although they may appear reluctant to embrace new technologies, when they recognise their benefits, they can adapt and gradually incorporate these innovations into their work.

Generation X, formed during the rise of personal computers and the internet, is often viewed as a bridge between traditional and modern approaches. They can combine the responsibility and work ethic of the previous generation with openness to new technologies. Workers of this generation are flexible and pragmatic, which allows them to effectively combine face-to-face meetings with digital communication. This ability makes them natural mediators between older and younger colleagues (Peart, 2024). However, a degree of scepticism toward certain innovations–especially large-scale digitalization in social and economic environments–remains.

Millennials (Generation Y) entered the workforce at a time when internet and mobile technologies became widespread. The digital environment is natural for them and shapes both their professional and personal lives. This generation values flexibility and teamwork. Their approach to technology is characterised by rapid adoption of new tools, making them drivers of innovation in organisations. They often prefer digital communication, which increases speed and efficiency but can weaken personal relationships with clients and partners and lead to misunderstandings (Peart, 2024).

The youngest generation entering the labour market is **Generation Z**, often referred to as the "digital generation", which was formed in an environment where digital technology, the internet and social networks were an essential part of everyday life (Peart, 2024). The working style of this generation is shaped by constant connection to technology, which is not perceived by this generation merely as a tool, but as an environment in which they naturally operate. Generation Z prefers speed, efficiency and flexible working conditions, and values the possibility of visual and interactive communication through video calls and collaborative platforms. At the same time, it brings a high degree of adaptation to new technologies and openness to innovation to teams, which allows for easier access to information, quick task completion and the ability to multitask. As a result, the younger workforce is open to innovation and the effective use of tools such as Trello, Asana and Slack. These technologies promote transparency, task tracking and cross-generational collaboration, while enabling risk prediction and project management optimisation through data analysis and the use of AI. Although a positive approach to digitalization seems essential for the effective operation of many entities, it poses significant risks for Generation Z. Digitalization brings with it the risk of distraction, screen addiction, reduced traditional problem-solving skills, and threats to personal safety in cyberspace (Akkaya and Tabak, 2023). These aspects must be considered when planning and managing multigenerational teams to maximise the benefits of digitalization and minimise potential risks. In many cases, workers of this generation may also lack the deeper work ethic and experience that older workers have.

Looking at all generations, each contributes specific values and strengths to the work environment, so it is not simply a matter of replacing workers, but a complex process of synergy and transfer of information, experience and knowledge. While older generations provide reliability, stability and experience, younger generations bring dynamism, flexibility and technological orientation, which is essential today. However, the emerging differences can be a source of tension and conflict between workers of different generations, for example in preferences for traditional meetings versus digital communication, or in different perceptions of the pace of change. On the other hand, it is precisely the combination of these different approaches that offers the opportunity to create more resilient and innovative teams. Combining the experience of older generations with the technological and innovative capabilities of younger ones can increase creativity, team performance and the organisation's resilience to crisis situations. In addition to technological approaches, the value dimension that distinguishes different generations is also crucial. While older workers emphasise work discipline and stability, younger generations (Millennials, Generation Z) emphasise work-life balance and meaningful work. These preferences significantly influence motivation and the sustainability of teamwork. For project management, this means that technical and digital skills alone are not enough; managers must also be able to support team resilience and create an environment that combines performance with long-term employee satisfaction and stability. These aspects are becoming a key factor in the effectiveness of projects financed from public and European sources.

Overall, generational change brings a combination of challenges and opportunities. Combining the work experience and stability of older generations with the innovative and digitally oriented approach of younger employees enables the creation of more resilient and efficient teams. Successful management of this process requires respect for different values, effective use of modern technologies, and support for communication and cooperation across generations.

Digitalization as a Factor in Sustainable Regional Development

The process of digitalization has become one of the determining factors of sustainable development and quality of life in regions. Its application extends to economic, social and environmental areas and enables the creation of smarter, more inclusive and more resilient societies. Digitalization and the use of AI can strengthen not only the effectiveness of individual project teams, but also broader regional innovation capacity. In the European context, these factors are reflected in the ability of regions to draw on and make effective use of cohesion policy funds, while in the Asian context, digitalization is seen as a tool for rapidly overcoming demographic and social inequalities. Linking these experiences can offer inspiration on how to effectively integrate generational diversity into regional sustainability policy (Urbancová and Vrabcová, 2023).

One of the key elements of digital transformation is the use of Big Data. With the growing amount of data generated in real time through sensor networks, geoinformation technologies and user platforms, the need for its effective processing is increasing. Big Data has several basic characteristics, namely volume, velocity, variety, veracity and value. It is precisely the ability to process large and diverse data into a form that can be used for decision-making that offers significant potential for public administration and regional policy. Thanks to modern analytical methods such as edge analytics and fog computing, patterns can be recognised more quickly, enabling a response to the needs of a diverse society. In the context of regional development, Big Data supports more effective infrastructure planning, monitoring of areas such as the environment, and the creation of targeted social and health programmes (Sharma and Garg, 2024).

Digitalization is finding significant application in the field of health services, where it contributes to their accessibility, quality and efficiency. Digitised systems make it possible to better organise healthcare and use data to predict and prevent disease. For example, cloud storage of health data is being put into practice, enabling long-term monitoring of patients' health, sharing information between health and care providers, and creating comprehensive health records for a wider range of patients. In addition, the development of telemedicine and remote health monitoring makes it possible to provide care even in regions with lower availability of healthcare facilities. This type of technology is currently being tested in one of the Czech regions, Vysočina (Špičková and Pauzarová, 2025). Digital technologies such as machine-learning algorithms can be used to support diagnostics, but above all to optimise processes in healthcare services, from patient records to treatment coordination (Sharma and Garg, 2024). From a regional development perspective, the digitalization of healthcare services is therefore an important factor, as it ensures a better balance between centres and peripheral areas and promotes equitable access to care for the population.

Another important area is social care and protection, which is one of the fundamental pillars of public services. Here, digitalization enables more efficient provision of financial and personal support services, whether in the form of pensions, home care or support for people with disabilities. In many countries, digitalization has been successfully applied, for example, in financial transfers, which have become faster, safer and more accessible, even for disadvantaged groups. Digitalization of the pension system would primarily enable the automation of processes such as the processing of applications, the calculation and payment of benefits, and the tracking of years of service. Online portals allow citizens to contact institutions and check their entitlements without having to visit them in person, which reduces administrative costs and increases the transparency of the system. In addition, digitalization facilitates the interconnection of databases and control systems, which could significantly reduce the number of errors and eliminate illegal withdrawals (Sharma and Garg, 2024). Digitalization can be applied in the same way to the healthcare system, particularly in the area of health insurance. However, the implementation of digital solutions in social care remains more challenging than in education or health services, as it directly affects cultural and social structures and requires a higher level of acceptance on the part of users. From a regional development perspective, however, digital social care is crucial, as it ensures social cohesion and the inclusion of vulnerable groups, which directly affects the stability and attractiveness of regions (Bondarouk and Oivas-Lujan, 2014).

The digitalization of public services, from health to social services, is therefore an important tool for supporting sustainable regional development. Regions that can effectively integrate modern digital technologies into their infrastructure and services gain a competitive advantage in the form of a higher quality of life, better access to services, more efficient resource management and cost reductions. From a sustainability perspective, digitalization also makes it possible to link economic growth with the environmental and social dimensions of development, thereby promoting balanced and long-term sustainable development in regions (European Commission, 2024).

Methodology

The methodological framework of the article is designed as a qualitative and exploratory study that builds on the combination of a systematic review of relevant academic and policy literature, descriptive statistical analysis of secondary socio-economic indicators, and interpretative evaluation of the findings in the context of regional development and project management. This approach was chosen because the research problem – the intersection of generational change, digitalization and sustainability – is still insufficiently empirically examined and therefore requires an integrative and theory-driven perspective rather than a narrowly quantitative model. By linking conceptual insights from project management theory (e.g. life-cycle models, risk registers, stakeholder analysis) with measurable demographic and financial data, the methodology allows for capturing both the structural context (long-term trends in ageing, pension and healthcare expenditure) and the organisational dimension (generational differences in leadership, teamwork and use of digital project management tools). The research design combines three elements:

- Literature review – focusing on project management, social policy and digital transformation to map key theoretical perspectives and identify knowledge gaps, with emphasis on how generational change affects project governance, decision-making and adoption of methodologies (e.g. waterfall vs. agile).
- Indicator-based analysis – selected demographic and socio-economic indicators (age structure, pension expenditure, healthcare expenditure) were chosen because they represent the most direct measurable impacts of ageing and generational change on the sustainability of public systems, which are frequently addressed through projects financed by EU and national funds. These indicators also provide a relevant proxy for assessing pressures that project management must respond to in practice. An overview of the selected indicators, their units of measurement, data sources and time coverage is presented in Tab. I.
- Contextual interpretation – the findings are discussed in the context of project management practices in EU-funded projects, including requirements for monitoring, evaluation and reporting, where generational diversity and digital competences play a decisive role.

I: Overview table of indicators

	Unit of measurement	Reference period	Data source	Data level
Age structure of the population	percent (share of total population)	2014–2024	Own calculation	NUTS 0/1
Pension recipients	millions of people	2014–2024	Czech Statistical Office	NUTS 0/1
Pension expenditure	percent (share of GDP)	2014–2024	Own calculation	NUTS 0/1
Healthcare expenditure	percent (share of GDP)	2014–2023	World Bank Group	NUTS 0/1

Source: own elaboration (2025)

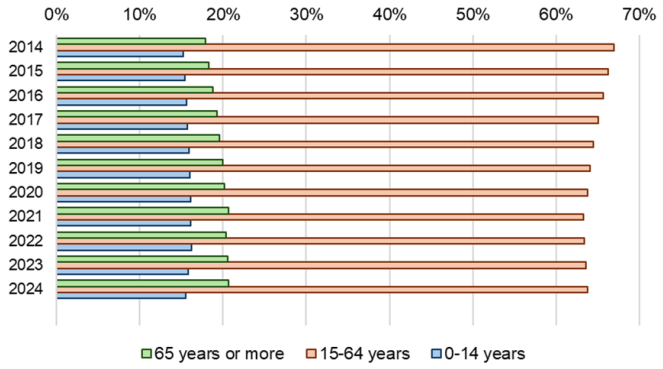
The descriptive part of the text focuses on defining basic concepts and characterising the key challenges facing the regions. These include population ageing, which is the main cause of growing pressure on the sustainability of pension and health systems and fiscal stability. These challenges are supported by data spanning 10 years (see Tab. I), which were drawn from public databases or used for calculation purposes.

The analytical part critically evaluates the findings from the research and description, with an emphasis on comparing the approaches of older and younger generations to project management, their different relationships to digitalization, and the potential for conflicts and synergies. The analysis allows us to link the theoretical basis with practical implications for regional development and shows how the combination of generational change and digitalization can contribute to more effective and sustainable project management. Although the paper does not use its own empirical research, its methodological approach based on synthesis and critical evaluation of available sources provides a relevant basis for formulating conclusions and recommendations (Nardin, 2025).

Analysis Results

The development of the age structure of the population is one of the key factors influencing regional development, competitiveness and the ability to adapt to new conditions. Particularly in the context of generational change in project management, it is necessary to monitor how the representation of individual age groups is changing, as these determine the availability of labour, the transfer of experience between generations and the readiness of society to introduce new technologies. For illustrative purposes, data on the share of age groups in the total population in 2014–2024 have been compiled.

Fig 1 shows three basic age categories: children (0–14 years), working-age population (15–64 years) and seniors (65 years and older). The age structure of society is gradually changing and that these changes have a direct impact on the labour market and on the way project management can be considered in



1: Share of age groups in the total population in 2014–2024 (in %)
Source: own calculation (2025)

the context of regional development. The share of the child component has remained relatively stable at 15–16 % during the period under review, with a slight decline in recent years. This fact suggests that the entry of young people into the labour market is rather stagnant, and therefore no significant increase in the new labour force can be expected. In the context of project management, this means that it is necessary to work more on developing the skills of the existing population and, at the same time, to look for ways to streamline processes through digitalization.

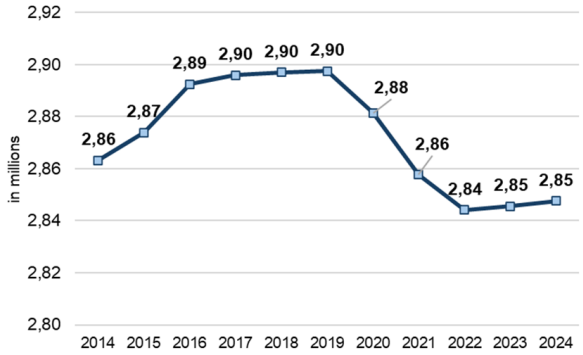
The productive component, i.e. the population aged 15–64, is showing a downward trend. While in 2014 it still accounted for 67 % of the population, by 2024 it accounts for 64 %. This relative decline means that the active labour force is shrinking, creating pressure on available workers to achieve greater efficiency and flexibility. The digitalization of project management acts as a tool that compensates for the smaller number of workers, speeds up communication, enables more efficient planning and monitoring, and thus supports the sustainability of projects and the overall competitiveness of regions.

In contrast, the senior citizen group grew from 18 % to 21 % between 2014 and 2024. This trend confirms the ageing of the population, which is reflected throughout society. We are seeing a similar trend of population ageing not only in the Czech Republic, but also in other EU countries and Asia. For example, in the Republic of Korea, where the pace of population ageing is twice as fast, the issue of generational change in project management is becoming a major challenge for the sustainability of social systems. A comparison of international experiences suggests that regions that can effectively integrate older generations through mentoring while supporting the digital skills of younger workers are better able to cope with the pressure on social and economic systems. This parallel shows that generational diversity and digitalization are universal factors in regional adaptability (European Commission, 2024).

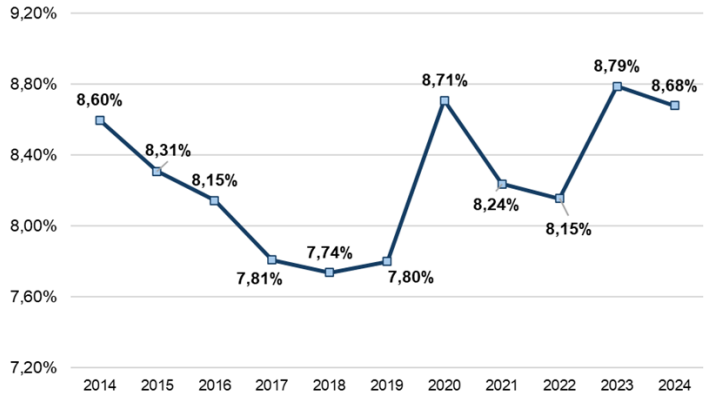
The data monitored showed that demographic trends in the Czech Republic are leading to a gradual decline in the economically active population and a simultaneous increase in the proportion of senior citizens. This has direct implications for regional development. Regions must find ways to cope with a smaller available workforce while ensuring the sustainability and quality of the projects implemented. However, the decline in the proportion of the productive population does not only mean fewer workers, but also pressure to change work values and culture. The younger generation places greater emphasis on work-life balance, while the older generation emphasises work discipline and stability. If regions are to survive in an environment of a smaller workforce, it is also necessary to develop team resilience – i.e. the ability to cope with stress, adapt to change and maintain long-term project performance. It is precisely the combination of digital tools and the value orientation of generations that can bring new impetus to regional development (Nardin, 2025).

However, this change in structure, particularly the increase in the proportion of senior citizens, is putting pressure on the pension system, as mentioned above. As can be seen in Fig. 2, data from 2014–2024 show that the number of pensioners in the Czech Republic has long remained at around 2.85 to 2.90 million people. The highest values were recorded between 2017 and 2019, when the number of pension recipients reached 2.90 million. A slight decline has been evident since 2020, with this indicator standing at 2.85 million in 2024. Overall, it can be said that the size of the senior population remains high in the long term and represents a significant structural factor in Czech society.

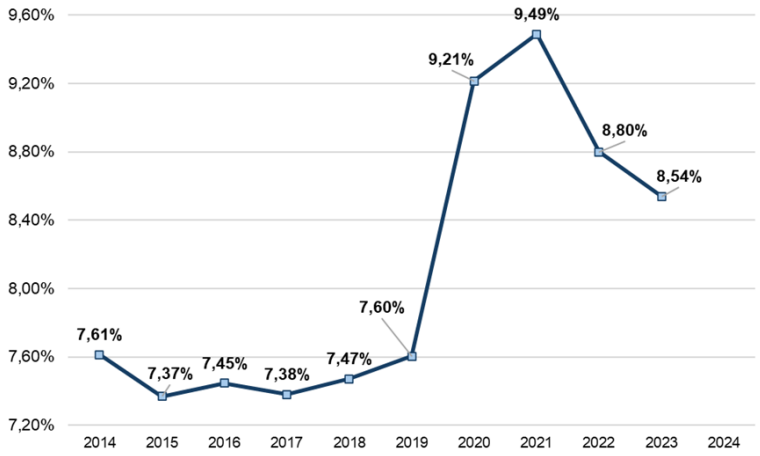
The pension system is burdened by constantly rising expenditure on pension payments (see Fig. 3), including old-age, disability, widow's and orphan's pensions. The digitalization of the pension system could play a key role in this regard. The introduction of digital tools would make it possible to streamline the administration of pension agendas, speed up communication between citizens and institutions, and ensure the transparency of the entire process. Automated systems and electronic records can reduce the administrative burden, speed up the processing of applications and minimise the risk of errors. Given that



2: Number of pension recipients in 2014–2024 (in millions)
Source: ČSÚ (2014–2024)



3: Share of pension expenditure in GDP in 2014–2024 (in %)
Source: own calculation (2025)



4: Share of healthcare expenditure in GDP in 2014–2024 (in %)
Source: World Bank Group (2014–2024)

the number of pensioners remains high, it is important to find ways to ensure the sustainability of the pension system in the future. Digital technologies enable more accurate predictions of the development of the number of pensioners, modelling of financial costs and timely risk assessment. Based on this, more targeted measures can be taken to help maintain the stability of the system in the context of an ageing population.

Another area where the introduction of digitalization could lead to greater efficiency is healthcare. As can be seen in Fig. 4, expenditure in this area also accounts for a significant share of the Czech GDP. Data on the share of healthcare expenditure in 2014–2024 show that the Czech Republic has long spent approximately 7.4–7.6 % of GDP, with a significant change occurring during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, this share

increased to 9.49 %. Although there has been a slight decline in subsequent years, the level remains above 8.50 % of GDP, which is a significant increase compared to the previous decade. This trend may reflect not only the rising costs associated with extraordinary health crises, but also the gradual ageing of the population and higher demand for healthcare.

The increasing share of healthcare expenditure clearly demonstrates that demographic ageing and the growth in the number of senior citizens have a direct economic impact on the functioning of the state and regions. As people gradually retire, not only does the pressure on the pension system increase, but so does the demand for health services and the demands on health infrastructure. If the long-term sustainability of these systems is to be maintained, it is necessary to find ways to optimise costs without compromising the quality of care provided.

The introduction of electronic health records, telemedicine or smart care planning systems would enable more efficient use of resources and reduce operating costs. Digitalization reduces the administrative burden on healthcare staff, freeing up capacity for direct patient care. Electronic data sharing between healthcare facilities minimises duplication of tests, speeds up diagnosis and increases the accuracy of treatment procedures. This not only brings financial savings but also improves the quality of healthcare services. The significant potential of digitalization also stems from the development of preventive care. Modern digital tools make it possible to monitor the health status of the population in real time, identify risk factors and thus prevent possible complications that would require costly treatment.

The results of the analysis confirm that demographic changes are not only a matter of social policy, but also directly affect the quality of project management and thus the competitiveness of regions. Regions that manage to combine digital transformation with support for multigenerational cooperation, mentoring and the development of work values have a better chance of maintaining economic stability and social cohesion. Otherwise, there is a risk that labour shortages and rising pension and healthcare costs will hamper the ability of regions to draw on funds, develop innovation and maintain long-term sustainability. Generational change and digitalization are thus becoming not only an organisational challenge, but also a strategic factor in regional development.

Discussion and Conclusion

The analysis shows that generational diversity and digitalization are not only an organisational problem for individual teams, but also an important factor in shaping regional competitiveness. Regions that can harness the potential of intergenerational cooperation, develop digital skills and at the same time respect the value preferences of workers strengthen their ability to attract investment, innovation and skilled labour. This approach not only supports more efficient use of public and European funds, but also long-term social and economic sustainability. Generational change in project management thus becomes a strategic tool for regional development and international adaptability.

Based on an analysis of selected indicators, the importance of digitalization in the field of social policy was also highlighted. With the increasing pace of population ageing, pressure on the pension and health systems is also growing. Digitalization in project management makes it possible to streamline planning, coordination and monitoring, thereby compensating for the lower number of workers in the productive segment of the population. In the area of the pension system, digitalization ensures greater transparency, efficient management and the possibility of predicting future development scenarios. In healthcare, it contributes to cost reduction through efficient data sharing, prevention and optimisation of care provision. All these aspects show that digitalization is not only a supporting element but a necessary condition for maintaining the stability of public systems.

From a regional strategy perspective, regions that actively promote digital literacy, intergenerational cooperation and innovative approaches to project management are better able to compete globally for investment, labour and resources. Generational change thus strengthens the capacity of regions to adopt and disseminate innovation. Digitalization acts as an accelerator, transforming project management into an efficient, transparent and sustainable process, which is then reflected in other areas of regional development, such as public administration and research.

It can therefore be concluded that the future of regional development and sustainability will largely depend on the ability to link micro-level organisational processes with macro-level regional strategies. Generational change and digitalization in project management should therefore be understood as complementary processes which, when strategically aligned, strengthen the competitive advantages of regions, reduce spatial inequalities and promote long-term sustainable growth. For policymakers, regional planners and organisations, this means that investment in digital skills, intergenerational synergies and adaptive project management is already a necessity to ensure regional competitiveness in the 21st century. However, this can also lead to conflicts and criticism. Generational differences in values, working styles and communication preferences can lead to misunderstandings that weaken the cohesion of project teams. Another risk is the so-called digital divide, where part of the

workforce, especially from older generations, does not have sufficient digital skills, which can lead to their marginalisation and unequal access to opportunities or the complete disappearance of jobs due to replacement by new technology.

The findings suggest several practical implications. For regional authorities, it is essential to support programmes that combine mentoring by experienced professionals with digital training for younger generations, thereby bridging the digital divide and preventing social exclusion. Organisations engaged in EU-funded projects should strengthen intergenerational collaboration by adopting hybrid project management approaches that balance compliance with regulatory frameworks and the flexibility required for innovation. Investments in digital infrastructure, AI-supported project tools (e.g. MS Project, Primavera, Asana, Trello) and lifelong learning will be decisive for the competitiveness of regions.

From a research perspective, further studies should empirically test the relationship between generational diversity in project teams and project performance, for example by linking project management maturity models with data on project success rates in different regional contexts. Particular attention should be paid to identifying which managerial practices mitigate conflicts and foster resilience, especially in projects financed from public and European sources.

Despite its limitations, the study demonstrates that generational change and digitalization are not marginal phenomena but core structural forces shaping the effectiveness of project and grant management. By strategically combining tradition and innovation, regions can strengthen both their institutional adaptability and long-term sustainability. The paper thus underlines that the capacity to integrate intergenerational collaboration and digital competences directly into project management processes will be one of the decisive factors of regional competitiveness in the 21st century.

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