The appearance of old age in the documents regulating artificial intelligence of the European Union and Hungary

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In our paper, we review the most important domestic (Government Resolution 1573/2020. (IX. 9.) on the Artificial Intelligence Strategy of Hungary and certain measures necessary for its implementation; Artificial Intelligence Strategy of Hungary) and European Union (e.g. White Paper on Artificial Intelligence: a European approach to excellence and trust; Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of harmonised rules on artificial intelligence…) legal and strategic documents from a gerontological perspective.

Objective

Our aim is to explore how decision-makers in Hungary and the European Union interpret old age in the world of artificial intelligence, to what extent and how this age group appears in the relevant documents, and to what extent the findings and expectations are in line with modern, scientifically demanding approaches to old age.

Method

In our paper, we rely on the methods of document and content analysis, our analyses are primarily qualitative, although in some places we also rely on statistical tools.

Result

Our analysis reveals that gerontological aspects and old age appear barely, or rather only at the level of mention, in these documents. Where they do appear, they occur without differentiation, treating old age as a single, monolithic stage, ignoring diversity.

In this undifferentiated framework, documents clearly treat old age as a “disadvantage”, with the elderly as a group to be protected, often treating them in the same category as people with disabilities or children. For example: “…groups at risk of falling behind (people with disabilities, the elderly, digital illiterates, low-educated people)…” (Hungary Artificial Intelligence Strategy

2020-2030, p. 31); “This may also affect non-discrimination and the rights of special groups – such as children, the elderly and people with disabilities.” (White Paper on Artificial Intelligence: A European Approach to Excellence and Trust [2020], p. 26). All this seems to be a failure to recognize and waste the potential and human resources inherent in old age.

In addition, the potential of artificial intelligence to improve the quality of life in old age is also being missed, acting more as a random “rant” than as a conscious analytical, legislative effort.

Conclusion

Our paper points out that it would be necessary to think more deeply about the relationship between old age and artificial intelligence, free from stereotypes, which should also be enforced in the relevant strategic and legal documents. All this would be an objective that can be achieved by professionals working in the field of gerontology, advocacy organizations and a broader social coalition – not only including the elderly.

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