In their lecture, Alanna Armitage and Zeljko Blagojevic will discuss demographic trends, with a focus on population ageing in Europe. Alanna Armitage will highlight the consequences of framing population ageing solely as a threat, arguing that it skews data collection, exacerbates intergenerational conflicts, perpetuates ageist stereotypes, and fosters policy environments that can neglect or even endanger the lives of older individuals. Conversely, Zeljko Blagojevic will counter this narrative by arguing that while ageing presents significant challenges to economies, proactive societal interventions – such as implementing preventative health measures and promoting active engagement in activism and volunteerism – can effectively mitigate associated costs and foster social development.

Alanna Armitage is UNFPA Representative for Mexico and Country Director for Cuba and the Dominican Republic. She is the former Director of UNFPA's Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia. She holds a PhD in Anthropology and Sociology of Development from the Geneva Graduate Institute. Her research has focused on exploring how imagination and ideology, rather than purely technical considerations around demographic data, are central to the creation and construction of the notion of population crisis. She is the author of numerous articles including a recent chapter "The silver tsunami, the ticking time bomb and other demographic imaginaries: Moving from demographic threat to demographic resilience", in the edited book, Ageing of the Oppressed: A Pandemic of Intersecting Injustice (Perel-Levin 2023). She is committed to bringing academic knowledge and policy worlds together in the pursuit of more robust public policies that improve people's lives and wellbeing.

Zeljko Blagojevic, Population and Development Programme Specialist at UNFPA Bosnia and Herzegovina since 2016, has focused on promoting demographic resilience policies and evidenced based strategies to contribute to the increased pace of socioeconomic development in the Western Balkans. With over 27 years of experience in programme management, Zeljko has worked closely with government authorities, civil society, and the private sector to find innovative solutions for improving the lives of different population groups. In collaboration with the University College London, he co-implemented surveys on loneliness in older persons and the impact of healthy ageing centres. He has advocated and contributed to the establishment of a network of healthy ageing centres in BiH that represent a unique and low-cost initiative with high return on investment in terms of health prevention and local activism/voluntarism.

Alanna Armitage and Zeljko Blagojevic's lecture is part of the project "Transforming Anxieties of Ageing in Southeastern Europe. Political, Social, and Cultural Narratives of Demographic Change", funded by VolkswagenStiftung.

Zoom link:

IOS Regensburg Ageing in Europe: Navigating the Divide between Threat and Opportunity (leibniz-ios.de)