

During the panel discussion of the jubilee conference of the Estonian Female Students' Society, entitled "100 Years – A Little or a Lot? Philosophical, Biological and Socio-Cultural Issues Related to Aging", held at the University of Tartu Library today, Evelin Ilves encouraged senior citizens to be socially active and to pay more attention to daily exercise and healthy eating, which are the surest guarantee of good health in one's old age.

According to Evelin Ilves, senior citizens can make a great contribution to society through volunteer work. "At a school in Shanghai that I visited, the children's hobby circles were conducted exclusively by grandmothers and grandfathers," Evelin Ilves said, citing a good example of the involvement of senior citizens in the educational system and the upbringing of children.

As an important topic, Evelin Ilves raised the issue of the health of senior citizens. According to her, scientific advances continually provide hope that we can all do much to improve our health. "When I was at university, we were told that it is not possible to maintain muscle tone after a certain age and that brain cells are not renewed. Today, the opposite has been proven. In other words, if you start exercising when you're 60, it is possible to maintain muscle tone and this is important from the standpoint of a strong immune system," Evelin Ilves said.

"I also put on roller skates at the age of 38, although this was considered to be a young person's sport. Actually, one can keep roller skating until an advanced age. Many senior citizens participate in international skating competitions in which I have also taken part. Once I skated for kilometres alongside an 80-year-old man. A lot depends on our attitudes – on the desire to believe that our eating and exercise habits can extend our life spans," Evelin Ilves added.

Professor Margit Sutrop said that when you're young it is important to put yourself in the shoes of older people and vice versa, in order to understand true values. "A society that does not seek balance can be called helpless, incomplete and also utterly nonviable," Sutrop said and called for a public debate to discuss why the elderly do not feel secure and well, or why they often do not contribute in a way that could improve their own lives.

The participants in the panel discussion included Evelin Ilves, Dr. Maret Truuvert, Dr. Kairi Kreegipuu, Ülle Kauksi, and the discussion was moderated by Professor Margit Sutrop.

Evelin Ilves encourages senior citizens to actively participate in society

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