

PRESS RELEASE 04/2024

Loneliness – Existential experience and societal challenge

Berlin, 12 June 2024

Many people in Germany feel lonely. What does loneliness mean for the individual? Who is particularly affected and what are the consequences for society? These and other questions will be the subject of the German Ethics Council's annual meeting on 19 June in Berlin. In addition to numerous high-ranking experts, Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth Lisa Paus will also be a guest.

One in three people between the age 18 to 53 feels lonely at least some of the time, and this figure is rising to 44 per cent among those under 30. This was the result of a recent study by the Federal Institute for Population Research. The trend remains persistently high. "Loneliness is not longer a marginal phenomenon," says Mark Schweda, who, together with Annette Riedel, is leading the Ethics Council's working group preparing the annual meeting. "The COVID-19 pandemic has made us much more aware of this issue. At our conference, we aim to analyse the health, psychological and social consequences that loneliness can have for the individual and for society, and discuss how we should address them. Ethical questions, such as social and democratic participation and justice, are central to this."

To this end, the German Ethics Council will first contextualise the complex phenomenon of loneliness within the historical and ideological frameworks and examine the empirical foundations from the perspective of social sciences, psychology and medicine. Furthermore, the manifestation of loneliness in various life situations and stages will be examined. The first forum in the afternoon will focus on loneliness in childhood and adolescence, loneliness in middle age and finally loneliness in old age and among the dying. A parallel forum will take a closer look at loneliness among marginalised individuals, loneliness in leadership positions and loneliness among people with caring responsibilities, such as single parents or caregivers. Subsequently, pastoral care and socio-political approaches to dealing with loneliness will then be discussed.

On the closing panel, Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth Lisa Paus, the former President of Diakonie Deutschland Ulrich Lilie, journalist Jakob Simmank and social researcher Claus Wendt will discuss how we can better face the challenges of loneliness politically and socially. The German Government had already launched a strategy against loneliness in December last year. The annual meeting of the German Ethics Council coincides with the government-initiated action week "Together against loneliness", which will take place from 17 to 23 June 2024.

Press Contact
Katrin Arnholz
Phone: +49/30/20370-246
Email: presse@ethikrat.org

Office
Jägerstraße 22/23
D-10117 Berlin
Phone: +49/30/20370-242
Fax: +49/30/20370-252
Email: kontakt@ethikrat.org
Website: www.ethikrat.org

Art exhibition

Loneliness can mean isolation, being alone and desolation, but it can also mean a conscious and positive decision to retreat, protect or find oneself. The latter is described by the term “solitude”. Seven artists have explored various facets of solitude and will be exhibiting their works during the conference. The exhibition “journeys of solitude”, curated by artburst berlin, will also be digitally documented for participants via livestream and made available on the website of the German Ethics Council.

About the conference

The conference is open to the public and already fully booked. Representatives of the press are therefore requested to register separately by email to presse@ethikrat.org. Participation via livestream is also possible at any time without registration.

Annual meeting

Loneliness – Existential experience and societal challenge

Wednesday, 19 June 2024, 9:30 am – 5:30 pm

Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Leibniz Hall

Markgrafenstraße 38, 10117 Berlin

www.ethikrat.org/live

Further information on the topic can be found at www.ethikrat.org/en/annual-meetings/loneliness.