

What needs to be changed for a better intergenerational solidarity?

FEPS debate on intergenerational solidarity with Sara Costa (YES – Austria), Jos Bertrand (ESO-Belgium), Vicky Lenaerts (MP Vooruit – Belgium), Belén Barreiro (Spain) and Andrea Gerosa (Italy). Maria Freitas (FEPS moderation - Portugal) (27 Mai 2021)

Representing ESO on the FEPS Hackathon – Mind the intergenerational gap” I propose a 4 points action programme to promote intergenerational solidarity:

“Come out of your bubbles, work together”

Indeed, solidarity and equality are the two leading values for our socialist and democratic project. Solidarity in general... and between generations. I am convinced that this is very necessary not only while solidarity is our central commitment but also while solidarity is not a certainty.

As President of ESO, my first act was to get in touch with our young socialists. We – ESO and YES - drafted up together with PES an intergenerational declaration in 2017, consigned by our PES president Sergei Stanishev. Together with PES and FEPS we (YES and ESO) organised two seminars in 2020 and 2021 on intergenerational solidarity...

And we have to do it also in our national parties, on national and on local level... and we have good practices in our member-organisations, f.e. our French speaking comrades in Belgium do it... In Brussels our local section from S-plus was working together with our cultural organisation and two schools did organise meetings between young and old.

Solidarity, equality, it depends on our conviction to stand for our values and our common vision on what kind of society we chose. As socialists we are engaged for “societies led by a caring government that leaves no one behind”. As ESO we insist also on the second part: “that no-one will be left behind” ... We must constantly let ourselves be questioned by the people who are the most vulnerable, and at the same time convince fellow citizens of our vision.

This means that for me socialism or social-democracy is not only a vision on society, it is also education and an educational project.

That is the first element in my response to our question: listen to the most vulnerable, convince our citizens, educate our societies. We have to do it together.

"Generation specific interests have to become common interest".

Speaking about solidarity and intergenerational solidarity, we have also to consider that when we talk about young people and their problems, that this is also very concrete for us, as seniors ... because we are talking about our children. I am 67 years old and my son is 29 years old and I am very concerned about his future and that applies to the vast majority of our generation. In this sense, our generation is also affected by the same problems. While childcare is lacking, grandparents take care, when elderly care is lacking children take care.

On the other hand, we note that many young people live very much in the present. This is clear in the debate on pensions, policy for the elderly, involvement of the elderly in the policy of our organizations ... Many young people do not think this is very "cool". **Nevertheless, young people are the seniors of tomorrow and the policy that we are setting-up today will provide care and services for them as they get older. Also, the debate about pensions, adapted housing for the elderly, care and health therefore concern not only the elderly, but all generations.**

That is the second element in responding your question how we can foster a strong intergenerational solidarity: convince young and old that speaking about our interest, it is speaking about common interest.

"Improve fundamental rights and create age-friendly communities"

Yesterday a Netherlands court of justice impose Shell to respect the Climate convention from Paris. Few years ago, a similar decision was taking against the State of the Netherlands... Why, what is possible for climate- agreements, cannot be possible for social and fundamental rights?

*On mondial level and on European level we have strong instruments (conventions, binding declarations, Charters) on fundamental rights, but what's lacking are tools and instruments on national or regional level to improve this right. **What we need are low-threshold points of contact for seniors, to which they can turn with their complaints about access to fundamental rights, who report the problems and help enforce their implementation.*** It exists in Wales, I Scotland and Malta. In the Northern part from Belgium for the Dutch speaking community, we have such a contact point for children's rights, together with our party Vooruit we are working for such a high commissioner on senior's rights.

In a broader way, ESO advocates also ***age-friendly cities and communities where the weakest (children and the elderly) are at the centre of interest. This, too, is what brings millennials and the elderly together. The WHO (World Health Organisation) is promoting it by an action plan, the European Commission should use this principle for age-friendly cities, while defining f.e. the criteria for infrastructure projects that's benefits from European financial support. It can also be a central criterium by introducing digital tools f.e.***

"Nothing about us, without us!"

All generations should be taken seriously! Young and old.

Therefore, ESO is pleading for more interest from our parties in senior organisations. Seniors represent over 30% of the voters and 40% of the members. It is not a homogeneous group: we are not only the old dependent seniors, who need care and complaint, we are also very active self-confident citizens and militants.

Seniors must become more visible in the parties and in society. They will gain political force, in society and therefore it is important to integrate them in our actions, in our work, in our decisions.

Now we observe that political parties and in particular social democratic parties, including PES give less attention to seniors and their organisations. Nevertheless, our parties can use the resources, potential and experience of the ESO comrades and thus become a balance to the YES.

ESO and YES both stand at the side-lines of PES. ***YES motivates to become active with the socialists and social democrats and ESO motivates to stay active with the socialists and social democrats.***

Older comrades should be perceived as a political force who wants to achieve full participation within the PES and to contribute to political achievement, etc..

"We are still here

You **must** count on us

You **can** count on us

But nothing about us, without us."

Jos Bertrand,
President ESO – PES-seniors
Brussels, 27 Mai 2021

Thank to our comrades you gave their input : Marianne Demestral (SP-60plus – CH), Andre Van Dokkum (Seniorennetwerk in de PVDA – NL), Philippe Martin (C2S – Belgium)