

ESO

Newsletter 05 (Oct 25)

PES Congress (Amsterdam, 16-18 Oct 25)



The PES held its congress in Amsterdam from October 16 to 18. The ESO was present. On the agenda: - General Assembly - Lecture by Prof Christel Geerts (VUB) on the European plan

against ageism - Meeting with Idoia Mendia (MEP, S&D, PSOE) and Joao Martins Pereira, President YES.



Jos Bertrand's contribution to the Congress

Older socialists ask for their own voice, their own network in our parties

Dear friends, dear comrades,

I am speaking here on behalf of our and your older comrades. You know us very well as long standing militants, engaged in our social democratic movements and parties. You have to know that we are more than the past, we – older persons – are also actors for the future.

We live in turbulent times, with war and uncertainty, where new world leaders, populists and anti-democrats, are taking over the leadership from the international community, garant

for respect for democracy and fundamental rights, for their own profit and interests. Yet, we remain confident in our social democratic movement. Together, we can turn the tide.

This means returning to our roots: empowering/educating people—young and old—to become resilient, engaged citizens who stand up for solidarity, equality, democracy, and human rights. Alongside civil society, of which we are part, from the climate youth to the grandparents for the climate, trade unions, older-persons and youth organizations, social NGOs, trade unions, we must reconnect and rebuild our society.

We have to listen to people's needs: a decent income, affordable housing in age-friendly environments, lifelong learning, guaranteed accessible care and healthcare, a good job, a healthy climate, and governments at every level that protect citizens from inequality and insecurity; and provide answers to the challenges such as aging, growing inequalities, climate change.

As seniors, we stand for solidarity between generations. We want a society where even vulnerable people are recognized as full citizens, where care is granted, and where people—not machines—are there to help when needed. We fight against ageism and demand European policies against ageism and promoting age equality.

Together with our parties, we are committed to making this happen. You can count on us, as you have done it in the past, now and in the future. But we have one demand: as actors for the future, older persons will be recognised as full citizens. This concerns also our own social democratic movement and parties. Many parties don't longer organise their older members, contrary to the youngsters and other specific groups. Please, give older militants their organisation, their network in the party, so that we can – as organised citizens- fully participate in the future.

PES Congress - Amsterdam, 17 October 2025

Jos Bertrand

President ESO (European Senior Organisation)



senior strategy: a future for our youngsters

ESO organized a fringe meeting on the European senior strategy, drawing on proposals based on our election memorandum and action program.

The fringe meeting was two folded :

- a conference of Prof Christel Geerts (VUB).
- a discussion panel with Idoia Mendia (MEP S&D PSOE), co-chair of the interest group on intergenerational solidarity, Joao Martins Pereira, President YES, and Jos Bertrand, President ESO, moderated by François Balate (FEPS)

Conference of Christel Geerts

Speaker Prof. gerontology (VUB) Christel Geerts, President Solidaris, shared insights from her experience in age-friendly policy.

She presented a possible EU action plan against ageism.

The main issues are:

- *Efforts to address legal gaps concerning equality principles*
- *Develop age-friendly labour markets*
- *Ensure adequate pensions and income security*
- *Expand home and community-based care*
- *Recognize unpaid care*
- *Combat ageism, launching a public campaign to challenge stereotypes*
- *Create some structures to coordinate this combat and organise some events (annual event) to support this combat*

The full presentation is available on the ESO website :

[2025 PES Congress ESO fringe meeting “A European senior strategy: a future for our Youngsters” – European Senior Organisation](#)



Panel discussion

Contribution of Idoia Mendia (MEP, PSOE)

- The place for discussing ageing is Parliament. There is currently no comprehensive policy for senior citizens. However, there is a mandate to develop an 'intergenerational fairness strategy' (IFS).
- In terms of employment: if you lose your job at the age of 50, it is difficult to find another one. Yet you have experience. It is the same challenge for young people: finding your first job is difficult because you lack experience.

Synergy should be exploited: young people should be invited to "senior" sessions and vice versa.

Contribution of João Martins Pereira (President of the Young European Socialists (YES))

- Young people and senior citizens face the same challenges: they are unable to contribute productively to the economy; it is difficult for them to find suitable housing; access to education is also a problem for both groups (for different reasons). Finally, gender equality is also an issue for both senior citizens and young people.



Amsterdam: Spanish contribution

Pedro Sánchez, Prime Minister of Spain and Secretary General of the PSOE, referred to the “challenges” to defend “the soul of Europe”, the “social Europe”. “The housing crisis, which hits young people hardest”; “to continue advancing in equality”; “strengthen the commitment to a fair energy transition” and “expand the European social shield” to include “a common minimum wage across the Union”. “We choose to stand up, not hide. We choose an open and prosperous Europe, not a closed and impoverished one. We choose to move

forward with courage, not to give in to fear. We choose a bright future over the ghosts of the dark past. We choose and we act. Let's go for it".

Mariqueta and Juan had also the opportunity to talk to Idoia Mendia



Amsterdam: Swiss contribution

After more than 50 years of membership in the Socialdemocratic Party of Switzerland, I have attended numerous conferences, additionally several PES conferences, and had no particular expectations regarding the content of the PES congress in Amsterdam. I was therefore all the more surprised to experience a meeting that radiated a spirit of optimism, mobilized people in an infectious way, gave socialist personalities from all over the world a chance to speak, either in person or via video, and was also perfectly organized.

I was impressed and also a little proud of ESO's fringe event "A European Strategy for Older People: A Future for Our Youth" – which is honored in a separate article in this newsletter. I was particularly moved by the speeches of the courageous Julia Navalnaya, who fights

unwaveringly for a democratic Russia, and the intrepid Yair Golan, chairman of the Israeli Labor Party, who presented his vision for Israel: a democracy with equal rights for all citizens. The path to peace with Palestine is political and diplomatic in nature; war brings no solution.

I left the congress with the conviction that together, we can build confidence for change and uphold our common values of freedom, equality, and justice not only for elderly but for the whole socialist and social democratic family.

Marianne de Mestral

Vice President ESO



Spain: International Day of the Older Person (01 Oct)

On October 1st, the Socialists of Madrid celebrated the International Day of Older Persons at our headquarters during an event chaired by the Secretary General of the PSOE (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) of Madrid and Minister for Digital Transformation and the Civil Service of Spain.

During the event, our fellow ESO members Mariqueta and Juan Gabriel were awarded "for their commitment to their entire socialist career."

Mariqueta & Juan Gabriel

Mayores Socialistas / PSOE



EU Commission work programme 2026

The 2026 Commission work programme sets out the key strategies, action plans and legislative initiatives that will lay the foundation for the work ahead during this mandate and help deliver on our ambition to build a strong, secure, and prosperous Europe.

This work programme outlines the main initiatives the Commission will take in the second year of its mandate.

Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission: *"In a world of imperial ambitions and imperial wars, a world in which dependencies are ruthlessly weaponised, a new Europe must emerge."*

The full document is available on the following link :

[Commission work programme 2026 - European Commission](#)

or

https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/strategy-documents/commission-work-programme/commission-work-programme-2026_en#:~:text=The%202026%20Commission%20work%20programme%20sets%20out%20the,to%20build%20a%20strong%2C%20secure%2C%20and%20prosperous%20Europe.

FEPS: intergenerational solidarity in Europe

Championed by progressives, intergenerational solidarity embodies the values of social justice, sustainability and democracy.

It builds on the universal character of human rights, which ensure equal dignity, wellbeing and a duty towards one community.

This policy brief analyses this concept, building on existing research and on wide consultation with academics, civil society, and key stakeholders such as the Young European Socialists and the European Seniors Organisation. It constitutes a progressive contribution to the upcoming EU Strategy on Intergenerational Fairness, announced by the European Commission for early 2026.

The full document is available on the following link:

[PB-Intergenerational-Solidarity-DIGITAL8.pdf](#)

Europe: driving licence

On Tuesday 21 October, MEPs finally adopted a reform of driving licences in the European Union (EU) to meet their target of halving the number of road deaths by 2030 and achieving 'zero deaths' by 2050.

Under the reform, licences will be valid for 15 years, and the validity period may be reduced for drivers aged 65 or over so that they undergo more frequent medical examinations or refresher courses.

EU countries have three years to transpose the new provisions into national law and an additional year to prepare for their implementation.

