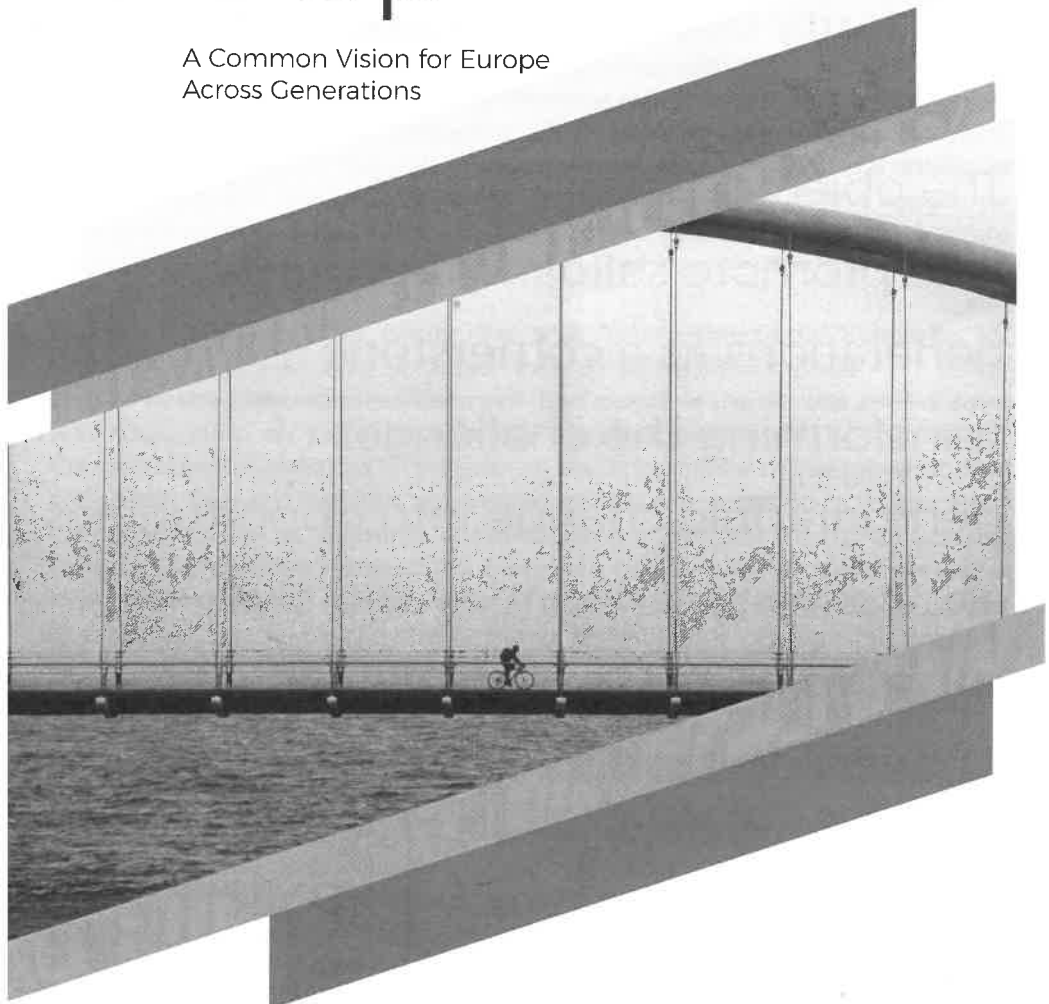


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# Bridging the Gap

A Common Vision for Europe  
Across Generations




*Joint ESU-YEPP Statement to mark the 10th  
European Day of Solidarity between Generations.*

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## **April 29th marks the European Day of Solidarity between Generations.**

The objective of this annual celebration is to promote solidarity between generations as a cornerstone in transforming the challenges of demographic change into opportunities and to invite authorities and civil societies at all levels to put solidarity between generations high up on their agenda.



For more than 30 years, international and European institutions have been highlighting the importance of intergenerational solidarity, which is understood as “social cohesion between generations”, forming an “inclusive society for all ages”. It refers to interpersonal relations between the younger and older generations, including child-parent-grandparent relations, social participation in communities, as well as structural societal solidarity guaranteeing social protection and pensions, health care and long-time care. It is a pillar of fair and sustainable societies, informal and formal welfare and it is an integral part of the European social model.

Ten years ago, in event under the title “Intergenerational Solidarity for Cohesive and Sustainable Societies” in Brdo (Slovenia) on 28-29 April 2008, hosted by the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU, the 29th of April was designated as the European Day on Intergenerational Solidarity and Cooperation to remind us, every year, of the importance of intergenerational solidarity<sup>1</sup>. To mark the 10th anniversary of this event and to highlight their common interest in solidarity between generations, the European Seniors’ Union – ESU and the Youth of the European People’s Party - YEPP present a joint declaration and invite governments and officials at all levels, as well as civil society, on this day, to embrace and promote our call for a fair, solidary, and inclusive society for all age groups.

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<sup>1</sup> Intergenerational Solidarity for Cohesive and Sustainable Societies. Outcomes of the Slovenian Presidency Conference. Brdo, Slovenia 28 - 29 April 2008.

# SOLIDARITY BETWEEN GENERATIONS AND THE CHALLENGES OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

1. Recalling that, pursuant to the 2009 Lisbon Treaty of European Union (Article 3), one of the Union's main aims is to safeguard the wellbeing of its people, and in this regard, the Union, among others, shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, promote social justice and protection, and solidarity between generations<sup>2</sup>.
2. Reminding that solidarity between generations is instrumental in tackling the problem of demographic change. In the "Reflection Paper on the Social Dimension of Europe"<sup>3</sup>, following the Commission's White Paper on the Future of Europe (1 March 2017) several challenges of demographic change are examined. The Paper highlights the question of intergenerational fairness, stating: "There is today a real risk of a generational divide between younger and older people in terms of decision-making, wealth, material security and access to housing, as well as in terms of sharing the financial and fiscal burden of an ageing society."
3. Noting that the European Commission, the Council of the European Union, the European Parliament, and the Committee of the Regions regularly highlight the importance of solidarity between generations. The Member States have agreed on overall frameworks and strategies in line with the Action Plans for 'active and healthy ageing' developed by the World Health Organisation. The European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity Between Generations (2012) contributed to creating a political momentum for policy-makers at all levels and a wide range of stakeholders.

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<sup>2</sup> The Treaty of Lisbon, which was signed on 13 December 2007 and entered into force on 1 December 2009, in its article 3.3, it mentions solidarity between generations as one of the key areas to promote the well-being of European citizens.

"3.3. It (the Union) shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, and shall promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child".

<sup>3</sup> (COM(2017) 206, 26 April 2017): [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/reflection-papersocial-dimension-europe\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/reflection-papersocial-dimension-europe_en.pdf).

## FROM CHALLENGES TO OPPORTUNITIES

4. Noting that in recent decades, instead of a common perspective, common opinions and shared values, differences between young and older generations have been growing; in opinions, in attitudes, in participation. A gap between generations should not and cannot be denied. Stereotypes and segregation between generations hinder direct encounters, openness and respect as a base for new bridge; stereotypes and segregation hinder the chance to look ahead towards achieving common goals. These differences, of course, play a significant role when it comes to politics and public decision-making (see falling turnout in European Parliament elections, results of the 'Brexit' referendum and subsequent reactions such as young people protesting the results carrying banners reading 'You stole my future').
5. Recalling that the promotion of solidarity between generation goes beyond public awareness. It is also a call to deliver concrete results, respecting the potential of persons of all age, ensuring social cohesion and prosperity and contributing to the wellbeing of generations.
6. Supporting several calls for a more innovative, coordinated and integrated response to demographic change.
7. Underlining that, in view of an effective response to the challenges of demographic change, and by taking into account the differences and specific problems of certain regions and cities, the EPP in the Malta Congress last year, in its paper on "Securing Europe's Future"<sup>4</sup>, advanced the idea of a coordinated European strategy. That vision will need to be promoted by a wider range of institutions at the European Union level, in support Member States, regional and local authorities seeking to strengthen solidarity between generations as a part of the social dimension of Europe.

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<sup>4</sup> The European Union is facing unprecedented demographic changes (an ageing population, low birth rates, changing family structures and migration). In the light of these challenges, it is important, both at EU and at national level, to review and adapt existing policies. We recognize that strong families are a precondition for positive demographic developments, and we advocate pro-family values and policies. We need a more creative and coordinated response from the EU and its Member States, and we call for a European strategy on demographic change and for more family- and child-friendly environments. This strategy should aim to integrate the economic, social and scientific challenges and increase the potential of the workingage population. It should also stimulate active and healthy ageing and create new opportunities for intergenerational solidarity. Moreover, it should take into account the major disparities between and within Member States, both in terms of life expectancy as well as in living and working conditions. See: Secure Europe's Future: <http://www.epp.eu/pressreleases/epp-congress-in-malta-highlights-of-the-final-day/>

## THE WAY FORWARD

- The ESU and YEPP strongly value the cooperation of young and older generations. We want young people to receive the best education and training, making them competent to look to the future with hope and confidence. We want older persons to be respected for their potential and want them to be proud for what they have reached. As demographic ageing is strongly impacting European societies, we should strive to find a way to cope with it.
- Living longer is a sign of progress, offering new opportunities and inviting us to cope with the challenges of ageing societies. The ESU and YEPP want to work together in mutual respect between generations, learn from each other and exchange ideas. Only in developing a common perspective towards prosperous and fair European societies, we can meet the challenges of ageing societies and the needs of all generations.
- YEPP and the ESU experience the segregation of people based on age differences in social life and employment, the obstacles of age prejudices, stigmatizing both old and young with negative stereotypes, the limited interactions between individuals of different generations and the increasing differences and inequalities across generations in economic, social and political domains. We cannot fail to highlight the importance of intergenerational dialogue and exchange to bridge the gap between generations and prevent growing differences and conflicts.
- Most measures to respond to demographic change and intergenerational solidarity are the responsibility of the Member States: national, regional and local authorities. Good community relations, mutual understanding, reciprocity, the ability to connect between various social groups used to be established at grass-root level. Since these relations do not develop spontaneously in an informal sphere, authorities and civil society should encourage the creation of new and stimulating environments to fight against social exclusion, improve social integration and cohesion. This bottom-up approach also requires vertical cooperation between several levels of government supporting and backing up actions taken at local level.
- YEPP and ESU believe that the EU has a crucial role in the development of strategies on managing demographic changes, as it was expressed in the EPP document 'Europe secures our future' (Malta, 2017). This strategy will bring about several policies - innovation (digitalisation, Silver

Economy), employment, cohesion, transport, health, rural development - together and have a firm basis in common European values as anchored in the Treaties on the European Union.

- YEPP and ESU welcome the proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights (17 November 2017) aiming at creating a framework to adapt the Social Market Economy for the 21st century: a dynamic economy and prosperous and fair societies with social protection systems that are 'future proof'. The Pillar's principles range from wages to social protection systems, from minimum income to gender equality, from childcare to old age income, and from health care to access to housing. A generous implementation of the principles is needed. The first steps have been made. The European Semester will play a key role in the follow-up to the framework agreement of the Pillar as a reference for Country Specific Recommendations.
- Figures show that senior poverty has been the point of reference for overall poverty reduction: between 2006 and 2012, pension expenditure has risen by almost 12%, despite the fact that that segment of the population has only increased by 3%. No such rise has been aimed at young people. It is vital that we look after the older generation – the generation that helped to build the Europe we know today, but this focus must not take away from our investment in its future. We are certainly not arguing for an intergenerational strife for public spending - it is intergenerational solidarity that should be the guiding principle. What is needed is a more balanced approach to prevent the entire system from collapsing. Help those who could provide for all to get inside the social security system for good.
- The foundations for the functioning of our democracy and the participation of all in the political decision making are grounded on a fair, sustainable and inclusive society for all ages. In many countries, democracies are under pressure. YEPP and ESU are convinced that young and older persons have the right and the responsibility to participate and to be represented in governance. Therefore, we have to improve the participation of all in the political functioning of our societies, address the democracy deficit between generations and find mechanisms to bring young and older persons within the processes of decision-making, in advisory boards, governments.

YEPP and the ESU call upon the EPP to respond to our request on the importance of communication and solidarity between generations, starting with the promotion and celebration of the European Day of Solidarity between generations on 29 April 2018.

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