



29 April
**European Day of Solidarity
between Generations**

Manifesto "Intergenerationality Adds Up Lives" 29th April 2020

The Brdo Conference, organized under the Slovenian presidency of the European Union and the European Commission on 28th and 29th April 2008, under the title Intergenerational Solidarity for Cohesive and Sustainable Societies, established 29th April as the "European Day of Solidarity and Cooperation between Generations", a date that has been celebrated since 2009.

Principles

Among the elements that define us as humans, there are two that take on special importance: the fact that we are relational beings and that a good part of the relationships we establish are based on affectivity. This identity requires us to cover two basic social needs, to have contacts and affective ties, both in the family and in other wider and more diverse social spaces. Intergenerational relations have constituted an essential scenario in any society for weaving these contacts and having opportunities for affection, as well as being fundamental for the members of a society to be able to understand themselves, understand their environment and know the life cycle, orient their lives and project them into the future. The actions that we carry out so that people of different ages can interrelate and interact place us at the centre of life. Intergenerational programs are pure life and vitalize our communities.

A celebration marked by the Covid-19 crisis

The physical distancing caused by the measures adopted in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic has reduced and limited short-distance contacts, but in no case has it meant nor can it mean social distancing. The crisis situation caused by the coronavirus has focused attention on the reality experienced by older people, who have been particularly vulnerable not only from a health point of view, but also from their personal and social experience. Although this age group is increasingly diverse and heterogeneous, the health crisis has revealed certain situations that affect the models of care, relationship and coexistence, which have been questioned as a result of the experiences of a significant number of older people. Even the way of dealing with the state of alarm and the measures adopted when it has been necessary to give priority to the care of the people affected, as well as the

consequences, which are having a greater incidence and seriousness in this group of population, have caused situations that, on the part of foundations and associations that work in defence of older people's rights, have been deemed to be discriminatory on the grounds of age. Although references to the principle of intergenerational solidarity have become widespread in this context, as have the many community support actions and the evident displays of affection and empathy towards older persons that have been carried out since the beginning of the crisis, unfortunately the truth is that the prejudices and negative perceptions associated with age (*ageism*) have also been witnessed too.

The centrality of intergenerational solidarity

The preventive attitude that may arise regarding contacts between people of different ages, especially between children and young people and the elderly, as well as the relational changes to which it may lead, is introducing a new concept of risk that may question and limit inter-age relations. We must warn society of this type of perception vis-à-vis contacts between people of different generations and affirm that it is not intergenerational relations that cause a risk of contagion, but rather the physical contacts that take place involving infected people, whatever their age. What must be prevented is physical contact for the duration of the risk of contagion and measures of distancing and prophylaxis must be taken, but intergenerational relations must be strengthened now more than ever. Intergenerational solidarity, the principle on which the maintenance of our social state is based, something which has been demonstrated through the measures taken during this health crisis, must have a real space in our society in which such relations can be nourished and come to life. It is the absence of scenarios of encounter and interaction between people of different ages that reduces contacts and limits intergenerational relations, which generates isolation and loneliness and, consequently, dehumanizes our communities.

A time of change, a new model of society

Public opinion and society as a whole are demanding substantial changes in the way care services for the elderly are approached. Times of crisis are especially propitious for awakening sensitivity towards those who have suffered the hardest from its effects, as is shown in a frightening way by the direct figures of hospital admissions and deaths, but also by the situation of loneliness and isolation they are suffering during confinement and the consequences it will bring for them in the future. The measures adopted, which affect interpersonal contacts and restrict the spaces for social encounters, also affect other socially vulnerable groups such as children and young people. There are already conversations around the need to reconsider our forms of social relations, which involve not only the world of the elderly but all generations and relations between different ages. A situation of uncertainty that opens the doors to review and propose not only the type and quality of certain public services, but also our very model of coexistence, the design of service provision by public administrations and the definition of public spaces and social interaction. We seem to need a new way of focusing our communities from the intergenerational paradigm, which generates new proposals and possibilities to achieve a fairer and more humane society, centred on people, their attention and care.

Therefore, we propose

- To promote intergenerational contact between people of different ages, especially between children and young people and the elderly. We can live confined, but not disconnected. Public administrations, social entities and private companies must adopt the necessary measures to guarantee contact between those people who are most vulnerable to connectivity. It is necessary to rebuild intergenerational contacts through new means and modes of communication at a distance and to expand the possibilities of telematic encounters between people of different ages. To this end we propose the **registration and dissemination of information on the different intergenerational programmes and projects that are being**

carried out during confinement, so that they are known, maintained and serve as a reference and model for designing new actions that counteract the lack of physical contact and stop social distancing between generations.

- To adopt the intergenerational perspective as an alternative to specialisation by age is a new way of facing challenges and adopting solutions from an inter-age perspective in the design of services and public spaces. **Avoiding spatial separation from an age perspective**, which is commonly justified by the type of services provided to users, implies remodelling the organisation, management and services, as well as the uses of centres and public spaces, in order to **prevent and combat all segregation by age**. The sum of ages, the encounter and interaction between generations, contributes to making society more powerful, creative and efficient. **Intergenerationality should be used as a key perspective for the orientation of decisions in the field of public services and community space, opening us to new ideas and designs of intergenerational centres, spaces and communities.**
- **To value, recognize and intensify familial intergenerational relationships, highlighting their role in the development of affectivity and care in our communities, as well as to promote nonfamilial intergenerational programs and actions, connecting and complementing both realms.** The intergenerational must, in turn, serve as an alternative to the family when it does not offer a sufficient network of support and relationships, becoming a necessary means to prevent isolation in a society with a strong family culture. Administrations and social entities must develop actions and programs that promote and favor this network of community support.
- To consider **the intergenerational paradigm as the main axis to raise and design the horizons of a new social model.** Public administrations must incorporate across areas an intergenerational perspective into their active policies. Such perspective includes an integrating vision of all ages, promotes meeting spaces, encourages interaction, participation and leadership, commits to correct policies that are biased by age criteria and focuses public administration's action from an inter-age, common and integrating prism.
- **To set up networks among associations, groups, foundations and programs that work from an intergenerational perspective** aiming at connecting and making possible interactions among people of different ages. In this way we will be able to unite and multiply our efforts, and give meaning to the prefix "inter" that unites and connects the actions that we are trying to carry out under the motto "**Intergenerationality adds up lives**".

This Manifesto has been drafted by the following intergenerational practitioners:

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