



April 29th, European Day of Intergenerational Solidarity: Young and old together for a more just, equal and sustainable society!

Jos Bertrand, President of the European Senior Organisation

Today we face a global civilizational crisis that can only be solved by unprecedented action on an unprecedented scale. To avert this crisis, we have to see our fates linked and make good on that insight. The culture of the atomized individual obsessed with wealth and power has turned out to be the path to destruction of our habitat and ourselves. Additionally, people of means have long preferred charity to solidarity. Under the virtuous sounding guise of charity, the rich and powerful can bestow kindness from on high, without feeling implicated in, or responsible for the systems that produce poverty and inequality. It is in the absence of any coherent social ethos of solidarity, that the rich will always ask why they should have to 'give' to undeserving others, and balk at having to pay their fair share.

It is time to adopt a fundamentally different vision of human enterprise and shared endeavour, if we truly care about our future. The idea of intergenerational solidarity describes the ways in which we are bound together and how we can act to change our way of life. **Solidarity is not something you have, it is something you do.** It is a set of actions taken toward a common goal: a sustainable society. Moreover, in solidarity we'll be properly equipped to halt climate change, bringing welfare and prosperity for all.

It is time to counter with social actions and install that ethos of intergenerational solidarity. As older activists, we are proud to be part of a movement that helped bring about many social successes for all people: accessible health care, social security, public education, improved working conditions, etc. Unfortunately, the dominant neo-liberal paradigm at the

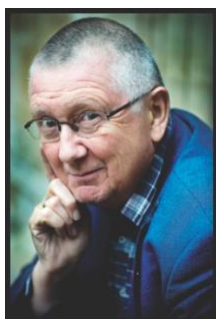
moment is eroding these achievements gradually. Yet we know what can be achieved by being committed to shared goals.

Consequently, being proud parents and grandparents, we also care about the future of our children, grandchildren and the planet. Hence, we have to stand by our children and grandchildren fighting for a social and green future.

Their commitment fully deserves our support, and we will not tolerate our children and grandchildren to be insulted, belittled and threatened for their social engagements. Their future is also our fight!

Together we can change the political balance of power in order to realise a more solidaristic state. A state that not only redistributes resources to 'beneficiaries' but also democratises control over how those resources are produced, allocated and managed. A solidaristic state requires shared sacrifices yet shares reward more equally.

This is the enormous challenge ahead: A sustainable, green and society based on solidarity, not run on charity but rather won through a determined campaign of collective self-liberation. **Either intergenerational solidarity forever, or our time is up.**



About the author

Jos Bertrand is President of the European Senior Organisation. The European Senior Organisation of the PES is a membership based civil society network, and voices the values of its member organisations to the EU.