

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO DEVELOP INTERGENERATIONAL LINKS AMONG EUROPEANS



14 PROPOSALS

for developing intergenerational and intercultural
homesharing programmes and activities in Europe



**WESHARE
WE CARE**

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*"As we overcome the pandemic, as we prepare necessary reforms and as we speed up the twin green and digital transitions, I believe it is time to also adapt the social rulebook. **A rulebook which ensures solidarity between generations.** (...)"*

President of the European Commission :

Ursula von der Leyen, 20 January 2021

CONSIDERATIONS



CONSIDERATION 1

SENIORS AND YOUTH **LONELINESS** IS AN IMPORTANT MATTER IN EUROPE

A 2021 European Commission Study¹ has shown that loneliness and social isolation have harmful repercussions on mental and physical health, as well as significant consequences on social cohesion and community trust. In Europe, a common public discourse is that loneliness is an issue that almost exclusively affects the elderly. However, it has been shown that young adults aged between 18 and 25 years old were hit more severely following the COVID-19 outbreak. Therefore, loneliness is not only a prevalent feeling among senior citizens, and particularly among the older section of the elderly, but it is also particularly visible among young adults.

CONSIDERATION 2

MOBILE STUDENTS FACE DIFFICULTIES IN FINDING **ACCOMMODATION ABROAD**

The widespread participation in international mobility schemes, including the Erasmus+ programme, requires widening the welcoming structures and support initiatives for international students. In this scenario, the topic of student accommodation is particularly relevant. **Particularly for international students.** In the Eurostudent Study², the European Students' Union (ESU) highlights that "the substantial lack of available student' accommodation and the continuous rise of housing costs appears to be the biggest overall issue in many European countries".

1 Loneliness in the EU. Insights from surveys and online media data - 2021. publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC125873

2 Eurostudent Study on Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life in Europe 2018-2021 eurostudent.eu/download_files/documents/EUROSTUDENT_VII_Synopsis_of_Indicators.pdf

CONSIDERATIONS



CONSIDERATION 3

MORE EUROPEANS ARE CARE DEPENDENT DUE TO AGE AND HEALTH ISSUES

According to Eurostat³, 14 % of Europeans could be more than 80 years old in 2100 (5,8 % in 2019). Our population is getting older and a large majority of seniors want to live as long as possible at home. Sharing one's home and therefore one's daily life with a young person from another country and culture allows for exchanges and intellectual stimulation. These programmes contribute to a more active and healthy life as well as helping to delay the onset of dependency for seniors.

CONSIDERATION 4

SENIORS AND YOUNG ADULTS WANT TO GET INVOLVED WITHIN THEIR COMMUNITIES

Focus groups set up in the WeShareWeCare project underline that there is a strong willingness of seniors and students to get involved in the local community. In terms of getting involved in the society, the 2021 AGE Barometer⁴ noted that for instance: "volunteering is a fertile ground for intergenerational exchanges and improves the understanding of different generations for each other's issues. Intergenerational exchange is also part of what motivates older volunteers".

³ Structure and aging of European population - 2020

ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Archive:Structure_et_vieillissement_de_la_population&oldid=510188

⁴ Age Barometer : age-platform.eu/sites/default/files/AGE_Barometer-2021-FINAL.pdf

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Intergenerational homesharing started more than 30 years ago in Europe, and interculturality has always been a key component of the experience. In fact, in 2021, about half of the young people involved in intergenerational homesharing in France (33 % in the Cohabilis network), Spain (70 % in the Convive programme managed by Solidarios para el Desarrollo) and Belgium (48 % in 1toit2ages) are coming from a foreign country.

Intercultural and intergenerational homesharing cohabitation is considered as a socially supported way to fight ageism, to fight prejudices against seniors and youth, to tackle individualism and to promote solidarity. These schemes help to strengthen interpersonal links for a sustainable and resilient society. However, **despite its multiple benefits, intergenerational and intercultural homesharing remains marginal across Europe.**

With a view to answering these concerns, the **WeShareWeCare** Erasmus+ funded project, sets out to develop tools to strengthen local collaborations between higher education institutions, international students welcoming structures and intergenerational and intercultural homesharing associations with the aim to improve the welcoming and integration of mobile students with **an accessible and solidarity-oriented homeshare service, and intergenerational and intercultural activities.**

Building upon the successful outcomes of the project, the WeShareWeCare policy recommendations aim to share concrete recommendations to strengthen intergenerational and intercultural homesharing programmes and activities at local, national and European level with the purpose to bring these topics to the forefront of policy discussions.

These policy recommendations target policy-makers in the field of youth and elderly, social integration and international student mobility affairs.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

EUROPEAN LEVEL



**AT A EUROPEAN LEVEL,
THE WESHAREWECARE PROJECT PROPOSES TO:**

1. INCLUDE INTERGENERATIONAL AND INTERCULTURAL HOMESHARE IN AN ACTION PLAN ON DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE AND SOLIDARITY BETWEEN GENERATIONS

2012 was declared the European Year for Active Aging and Solidarity between Generations and had the purpose to highlight the potential of older people and to promote their active participation in society. In the framework of 10 years, the European population has grown older. In 2021, the European Parliament published a report regarding the possibilities and challenges related to ageing policy post-2020 and within that report, the European Parliament called on the European Commission to prepare **an Action Plan on demographic change and solidarity between generations.**

We welcome the preparation of such an Action Plan and we encourage the European Commission to include intergenerational and intercultural homeshare and activities as one of the main actions that are targeted in this future Action Plan. We consider that these types of initiatives stand at the intersection between solidarity and active ageing.

2. INCLUDE INTERGENERATIONAL AND INTERCULTURAL HOMESHARE IN THE CALL FOR PROPOSALS OF EUROPEAN FUNDS, SUCH AS THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND +, ERASMUS+ OR ERDF

The Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) of the EU is the general framework regulating its annual budget every 7 years and for the 2021-2027 period it has seven main categories, called headings. **Heading 2 - Cohesion, resilience and values**, which is the largest budget line, represents three main EU policy areas (also known as 'policy clusters'): regional development and cohesion; recovery and resilience; and people, social cohesion and values. The last cluster, people's social cohesion and values, funds the European Social Fund+, the Erasmus+ programme or the European Regional Development Fund. We consider that intergenerational and intercultural homeshare can play a crucial role in enhancing social commitment and facilitate the sharing of informal learning between generations and we therefore propose that such initiatives and programmes should be included in their calls for project proposals.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

EUROPEAN LEVEL



3. INCLUDE INTERGENERATIONAL AND INTERCULTURAL HOMESHARE IN THE EUROPEAN CARE STRATEGY

In September 2021, the EU announced the launch of a [European Care Strategy](#) for the 3rd trimester of 2022 that will focus on early childhood education and care but also on strengthening long-term care for other people who might need it, such as senior citizens. We surely welcome this initiative but we propose that public policies should not exclusively focus on supporting long-term care, but they should also aim at fostering and achieving an adequate life balance for seniors.

Intergenerational and intercultural homeshare can be an initiative that supports senior citizens to stay longer in their homes and to avoid aging alone. Even though these types of initiatives are fully based on solidarity, we consider that the associations working and managing intergenerational and intercultural homeshare programmes should be included as a key element in the future European Care Strategy.

4. ACKNOWLEDGE THE LEARNING POTENTIAL OF INTERGENERATIONAL AND INTERCULTURAL HOMESHARING AS AN INFORMAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUNG (INTERNATIONAL) ADULTS

As stated in the Council resolution on a new European agenda for adult learning (2021-2030), it is crucial for adults to have learning opportunities (formal, non-formal and informal) which can provide all the necessary knowledge, skills and competences to create inclusive, sustainable, socially just and more resilient societies. We consider that the intergenerational and intercultural component of these types of homeshare programs can be taken as an opportunity to strengthen the informal aspect of learning for young adults and to provide them with Skills for Life as stated in priority 8 of the European Skills Agenda, which one of its priorities is to ensure social fairness.

Skills for life refer to “non-formal, life-wide learning, intergenerational, intercultural and community learning”.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

EUROPEAN LEVEL



5. INCLUDE INTERGENERATIONAL AND INTERCULTURAL HOMESHARE IN THE CITIZENS, EQUALITY, RIGHTS AND VALUES PROGRAMME CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The objective of the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme is to protect and promote rights and values as enshrined in the EU Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. It aims to sustain and develop open, rights-based, democratic, equal and inclusive societies based on the rule of law. That includes a vibrant and empowered civil society, encouraging people's democratic, civic and social participation and cultivating the rich diversity of European society, based on our common values, history and memory.

The WeShareWeCare project and platform aims to enhance and create links between European citizens of different generations and cultures, thus directly contributing to the exchange of views and opinions. Moreover, we envision that intergenerational and intercultural homeshare programmes can become an ideal informal setting for the transmission of European common civic values and history. As a result, we consider that these types of programmes should be included in their calls for proposals and therefore, unlock access to this type of funding.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

NATIONAL LEVEL



**AT A NATIONAL LEVEL,
THE WESHAREWECARE PROJECT PROPOSES TO:**

6. GATHER EXPERTISE ON HOMESHARING INITIATIVES

The ministries of housing, youth and elderly affairs should collaborate together to promote homesharing in existing policies.

Housing and social policies and expertise are largely focused on either the elderly or the student population, with architecture and urban layout segmenting each profile into a dedicated public space. There is little opportunity for those involved in student housing and retirement homes to work on joint projects.

Studying the opportunities that public policies dealing with housing and social issues for young people and at the same time for the elderly could:

- strengthen the knowledge of these innovative and inclusive initiatives, and
- allow the actors of intergenerational homesharing to share their experiences and proposals.

7. GIVE A LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR HOMESHARING

The studies carried out in the WeShareWeCare project show that the lack of a legal status for intergenerational housing can contribute to the difficulty for the elderly to host a person in their home.

The example of France, which with a specific regulation ([2018-1021 Law-article 117](#)) proposes a definition of intergenerational housing, can be inspiring for other Member States. Setting a legal framework prevents the risks of legal reclassification and can be a first step in setting up **a public policy on intergenerational matters.**

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

NATIONAL LEVEL



8. PROMOTE HOMESHARING THROUGH ORGANIZATIONS WORKING AT A NATIONAL LEVEL

National networks targeting seniors and youth can actively support intergenerational and intercultural homesharing.

For the public sectors, for example: social security entities, like Caisse nationale d'assurance vieillesse and Caisse nationale d'assurance familiale in France.

For the private sector, for example: citizen's associations, non-benefit insurance sector, social responsibilities strategies for private companies.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

LOCAL/REGIONAL LEVEL



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES:

9. ENHANCE COLLABORATIONS BETWEEN ALL LOCAL ACTORS CONCERNED WITH INTERGENERATIONAL AND INTERCULTURAL PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES

Local authorities should enhance links between public services (social/housing/youth/employment, European mobility), intergenerational homeshare associations and schools/universities (student life), in order to share a mutual knowledge of their respective activities.

For example:

- social services can appropriately inform their elderly service users about intercultural homesharing programmes and/or activities in their local context,
- intergenerational actors should create strong collaboration partnerships with youth information and orientation centers.

10. INCLUDE THE PROMOTION OF HOMESHARING PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES IN LOCAL AUTHORITY COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Local authorities should promote intercultural and intergenerational homesharing on all their communication supports: paper and digital based. Those plans would be enriched by targeting both youth and seniors.

11. SUPPORT LOCAL HOMESHARE ASSOCIATIONS

Associations working in the intergenerational and intercultural homesharing need support on the medium and long term. For example, the [Municipality of Madrid](#) has been funding the intergenerational homesharing programme “Convive”, run by Solidarios for 18 years. Since 2013, they work in direct collaboration and Madrid social services directly recommend “Convive” to senior citizens who would be interested.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

LOCAL/REGIONAL LEVEL



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNIVERSITIES (STUDENT LIFE - INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY) / HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS:

12. ACTIVELY PROMOTE INTERGENERATIONAL AND INTERCULTURAL HOMESHARE OPPORTUNITIES ON THEIR INSTITUTIONAL WEBSITES FOR MOBILE STUDENTS

Universities should build partnerships with local homeshare associations and propose on their institutional websites intergenerational and intercultural homeshare as a form of accommodation opportunity abroad.

In this early stage of the mobility journey, making information on homeshare programmes and opportunities available can inform the students' choice of host institution.

For example: the University of Latvia promotes the WeShareWeCare project and platform on their [institutional website](#), the [University of Köln](#) portal or the homesharing programme managed by the [University of Alicante](#).

13. INCLUDE INFORMATION ABOUT INTERGENERATIONAL AND INTERCULTURAL HOMESHARE PROGRAMMES IN THE WELCOME PACK FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Universities should include intergenerational and intercultural homeshare programmes and opportunities on their online and paper-based welcome pack for international students (pre-departure or during orientation week). This information can help mobile students directly to find suitable and affordable accommodation.

This is particularly important for students from less advantaged backgrounds, as these accommodation options normally entail no or reduced financial costs.

14. ENCOURAGE SENIOR STUDENTS TO GET ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN INTERGENERATIONAL AND INTERCULTURAL HOMESHARE PROGRAMMES

Most universities offer learning programs or opportunities targeting senior students (i.e. University for the elderly, summer schools). Through those programs, institutions can encourage seniors to participate in local intergenerational and intercultural homeshare local associations. For example: [Université des Aînés](#) in Louvain in cooperation with Louvain Université UCL.

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