

PUBLIC POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT

Scope and orientation of the recommendations

The recommendations presented below should not be understood as a closed set of measures to be applied uniformly across all institutional or territorial contexts. Their purpose is to provide guidance for the design of public policies informed by the evidence generated by the CIVIS project, particularly with regard to the creation, maintenance and evaluation of intergenerational spaces for deliberation, collaboration and mutual learning. From this perspective, the report is situated within the framework of scientific advice for public policy. This entails translating the lessons derived from the research into criteria for action, while remaining mindful of the limitations of the study, the situated nature of the data and the need to adapt any intervention to specific social, institutional and territorial conditions. The evidence produced by the intergenerational encounters does not allow for the formulation of general prescriptions, but it does make it possible to identify recurring problems, enabling conditions and relevant precautions for public administrations, universities, educational institutions, community organisations and local actors interested in strengthening social cohesion and democratic quality.

It should also be emphasised that these recommendations do not derive exclusively from the specific format of the dialogues developed by the UAM team; rather, they aim to offer criteria that can be transferred to different intergenerational practices promoted within the CIVIS programme. Dialogues constitute a particularly relevant form of intervention, but they do not exhaust the range of possible activities. Workshops, citizen laboratories, educational programmes, community initiatives, cultural interventions, or spaces for collaboration among universities, public administrations and associations can share the same orientation provided that they respect certain basic principles: reciprocity between generations, recognition of lived experience, dialogical equality, reflexivity and public relevance.

The project starts from the premise that the crisis of deliberative spaces cannot be addressed solely through formal institutional reforms. As shown throughout the book, contemporary democracies also face an erosion of the relational infrastructures that enable people with different life trajectories to meet, listen to one another and produce shared diagnoses of common problems. In this sense, intergenerational practices can be interpreted as small laboratories of public sociology and deliberative democracy, insofar as they create spaces for listening, recognition and the collective construction of meaning among people from different generations.

The recommendations that follow are based on three main lessons. First, intergenerational interaction does not in itself eliminate conflicts, prejudices or inequalities, but it can help to make mutual perceptions more nuanced and reduce stereotypical interpretations. Second, age does not operate as a rigid boundary that mechanically divides political or cultural positions, but rather as a source of differentiated

experiences, memories and interpretive repertoires. Third, if these spaces are to have social impact, organising one-off encounters is not enough: they need continuity, resources, facilitation, evaluation and institutional articulation.

Principles for the design of intergenerational policies

1. Recognise intergenerational spaces as local democratic infrastructures.

Public policies often conceive citizen participation in terms of consultations, formal bodies or one-off deliberative processes. However, the project experience shows the importance of creating more everyday, flexible and relational spaces in which people of different ages can discuss public issues without being reduced to fixed categories such as “young people” or “older people”. These spaces can be developed in universities, civic centres, libraries, educational institutions, residential care facilities, neighbourhood associations or municipal facilities.

2. Avoid paternalistic or welfare-oriented approaches to intergenerationality.

Intergenerational communities should not be understood as programmes in which one group unilaterally helps another, but as spaces of reciprocity, mutual learning and shared knowledge production. The project shows that older participants do not take part solely as bearers of memory or experience, nor do younger participants participate solely as representatives of the future or innovation. Both groups contribute relevant diagnoses, doubts, concerns and interpretive capacities. Public policies should therefore design arrangements in which people of all ages are recognised as legitimate interlocutors.

3. Incorporate intergenerational deliberation around specific public issues.

The CIVIS experience suggests that these spaces work better when they are organised around socially relevant issues, such as the climate crisis, migration or artificial intelligence, which affect different generations in differentiated yet shared ways. This approach prevents intergenerationality from being reduced to an abstract end in itself and makes it possible to connect it with substantive debates on democracy, rights, sustainability, care, technology and coexistence.

4. Safeguard the conditions for participation and the quality of dialogue.

The quality of dialogue depends on apparently minor but decisive aspects: balanced group composition, clarity of objectives, prior preparation, the time available, spatial arrangement, moderation and the existence of a climate of trust. In future programmes, it would be advisable to provide introductory materials before the encounters, allow

participants to choose or prepare the topics, and combine moments of open conversation with more structured dynamics. Such preparation can enrich the exchanges without turning the encounters into overly academic or technocratic spaces.

5. Strengthen the role of dialogue facilitators.

Intergenerational practices do not simply consist of bringing together people of different ages, but of creating the conditions for balanced and meaningful exchange. Those who facilitate these spaces should act as moderators, translators and reflective guides: moderators, because they must ensure inclusive participation; translators, because they can help connect personal experiences with broader social dynamics; and reflective guides, because they can encourage participants to become aware of how their generational position influences their perceptions, values and expectations. This role requires specific training and a careful stance: facilitating does not mean steering the dialogue towards predetermined conclusions.

6. Connect intergenerational programmes with institutional actors that can ensure continuity in the learning generated.

The participation of public or community representatives can be valuable when it connects the reflections produced in intergenerational spaces with local agendas, municipal programmes or institutional strategies. This articulation must, however, be handled with care: institutions should not instrumentalise these spaces as mechanisms for legitimising decisions already taken, but should incorporate them as settings for early listening, discussion, learning and feedback.

Priority lines of action

Based on the project results, several particularly relevant lines of action can be identified.

1. Promote stable programmes of intergenerational dialogue and collaboration in universities and municipalities.

Universities can play a strategic role as meeting places for undergraduate students, university programmes for older adults, academic staff, technical staff and community actors. However, if these programmes are to have an impact, they must move beyond the logic of isolated events and towards recurring formats: intergenerational seminars, citizen laboratories, shared courses, service-learning projects or deliberative forums linked to local issues.

2. Integrate an intergenerational perspective into local citizen participation policies.

Municipalities and local authorities could incorporate criteria of generational diversity into advisory councils, participatory processes, community assessments and strategic plans. Such integration would broaden the representation of different age groups in the spaces where problems are defined, needs are prioritised and intervention proposals are developed.

3. Develop civic, digital and scientific education programmes with an intergenerational approach.

The debates on artificial intelligence, social media and disinformation revealed a shared concern about the erosion of critical thinking, the difficulty of verifying information and the opacity of technological systems. In this area, public policies could promote educational spaces in which different generations learn together to evaluate sources, understand technological risks, identify algorithmic biases and deliberate on socially desirable uses of technology.

4. Link the ecological transition to criteria of territorial and intergenerational justice.

The dialogues on the climate crisis showed that environmental policies can generate resistance when they are perceived as abstract, urban-centred or insufficiently sensitive to concrete living conditions. Sustainability measures should therefore incorporate processes of intergenerational and territorial listening, especially in areas such as mobility, access to public services, non-emergency patient transport, energy consumption and climate adaptation.

5. Address migration through spaces of coexistence and recognition.

The encounters showed that perceptions of migration change when they are connected to concrete experiences, family histories, employment trajectories and everyday spaces of interaction. Public policies should foster shared educational, cultural, neighbourhood and associational spaces that can help dismantle prejudices without denying the real conflicts associated with inequality, precarity, discrimination or difficulties of inclusion.

6. Incorporate the intergenerational dimension into care and community well-being policies.

Unwanted loneliness, mental health, dependency, the digital divide and the care crisis do not affect only one age group, although they affect different groups in different ways. Intergenerational practices can help generate ties of support, recognition and cooperation, provided that they are not used to replace public responsibilities or to shift onto communities tasks that require adequate institutional resources.

Evaluation, monitoring and institutional learning

Any public policy inspired by this approach should incorporate an evaluation framework from the outset. The aim should not be merely to measure how many activities are carried out or how many people participate, but to assess what changes these spaces produce in relationships, attitudes, trust, participation and institutional capacity to sustain them.

At the individual level, evaluation can examine changes in attitudes towards other age groups, the creation of new intergenerational relationships, perceptions of mutual learning, reductions in prejudice, a stronger sense of belonging, or improvements in democratic competences such as listening, argumentation and empathy. At the institutional level, it can assess whether participating organisations incorporate intergenerational methodologies on a stable basis, create permanent programmes, allocate specific resources or modify their participation procedures. At the community level, broader effects can be assessed in terms of social cohesion, trust, cooperation, civic participation and the emergence of new alliances among institutions, associations and citizens.

Evaluation should combine quantitative and qualitative tools. Questionnaires administered before and after activities can provide useful information about changes in attitudes or perceptions, but they are insufficient to capture the complexity of processes of recognition, listening and mutual learning. They should therefore be complemented by interviews, focus groups, participant observation, reflective diaries, accounts of experience and analysis of the outputs generated by participants.

Public policies should also incorporate mechanisms for documentation and feedback. After each activity, participants can be invited to produce brief written, oral or audiovisual reflections on the learning, questions or proposals that emerged during the process. These materials can be used to prepare short reports, policy briefs or community assessments. However, it is important that participants are informed about how their contributions are used and receive some form of feedback. This cycle reinforces the idea that they are not merely sources of information, but co-producers of socially relevant knowledge.

Evaluation should therefore be understood as a learning tool, not merely as an accountability mechanism. Measuring impact makes it possible to identify what works, under what conditions, for whom and with what limitations. This orientation avoids both uncritical enthusiasm and paralysing scepticism: it recognises the potential of

intergenerational communities while requiring their effects to be empirically tested and interventions to be adjusted on the basis of the available evidence.

Precautions when translating findings into public policy

Moving from a pilot experience to public policy requires certain precautions. First, premature generalisation should be avoided. The CIVIS encounters took place in specific university and community contexts, with participants who were probably relatively predisposed towards dialogue. Their results therefore cannot simply be extrapolated to the population as a whole. This limitation does not diminish the value of the experience, but it does require future interventions to be designed in more diverse contexts and with groups less familiar with deliberative dynamics.

Intergenerationality should not be treated as a symbolic solution to structural problems. Spaces for dialogue can help reduce prejudice, strengthen ties and improve mutual understanding, but they do not replace the redistributive, labour, educational, migration, climate, health or technology policies needed to address underlying inequalities. Their value lies in complementing those policies by adding a relational, deliberative and community dimension that is often absent from institutional design.

It is also important not to “romanticise dialogue”. Conversation between generations can produce recognition, but it can also activate tensions, silences, inequalities of voice or defensive positions. Intergenerational spaces therefore require facilitation, methodological care and mechanisms to ensure that no single voice monopolises the conversation. Listening does not arise spontaneously: it must be institutionally organised.

Public policies should avoid a homogeneous conception of generations. Neither younger nor older people constitute internally uniform groups. Differences of class, gender, origin, educational level, territory, employment trajectory, migration experience or technological familiarity profoundly shape generational positions. A rigorous intergenerational policy must incorporate this plurality and prevent age from becoming an oversimplifying category.

Finally, intergenerational participation should not become a merely consultative procedure with no institutional effects. If participants perceive that their contributions lead nowhere, these spaces may generate frustration or reinforce distrust of institutions. Therefore, even when proposals cannot be translated directly into concrete measures, institutions should explain what lessons have been taken on board, what limitations exist and what steps could be taken next.

Final consideration

Taken together, the recommendations derived from the CIVIS project point to a central idea: strengthening democracy also requires rebuilding the social spaces in which



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citizens can meet, listen to one another and recognise themselves as sharing common problems. Intergenerational communities do not constitute a self-sufficient solution to the democratic crisis, but they can function as modest infrastructures for rebuilding the commons.