

An Interview with an elder woman about Intergenerational Solidarity of Young And Older Generations

Challenge: International Youth Day

Place: Kaunas / Lithuania

Author: Asta Kondrakevičiūtė

Contact: asta@efektasgroup.com

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I interviewed my neighbor who is 70 years old. She has kids who are around 48-50 and she has also younger granddaughters (5 in total).

She was asked how her communication with younger generations was and what challenges she faces.

She said that when her sons were teenagers and students she used to have better communication with her younger son and felt closer to him. Then he got married, had 3 girls, and traveled to live abroad with his family and distance affected their relationship. They became further away from each other.

She said with her older son it was vice versa. They were not very close, he was more closed up before but then his brother went abroad, he got married and had 2 girls in Lithuania, he got divorced, and has another partner and family now. Then his ex-wife died and he has to take care of his daughters more so my neighbor and her husband (his mum and dad) helps him with that. Maybe because of all problems my neighbor and her older son became closer and more open with each other.

Sometimes they have misunderstandings between them but they always try to solve them in the best possible way because as a family they care about each other.

The biggest challenge for her personally is to understand the youngest generation – her granddaughters.

She said that the oldest ones (her older son's daughters) seem to appear only in the moments when they need money, otherwise they might not even call. On the other hand, they were educated that way, whereby their parents were permitted to have and do anything they wanted. Also now, after the death of their mom (who died during the Covid period because of Covid) they have emotional difficulties but don't realize the real value of money yet and the care their grandmother puts towards them.

On the other hand, the daughters of the younger son are younger, more polite than the older cousins and talk more to their grandmother which brings her joy every time they do that.

General notice

In Lithuania, many families (parents) help their children even when they are grown-ups with both money and food supplies if they live in the village. There are different kinds of people so it doesn't mean that mentioned case applies to everyone. There is a group of older people who „keep family secrets inside" and don't want to share their experience with younger generations or say „everything is perfect" because they were taught that way. Older generations hide matters of their family because they think it will ruin the „honor" of their family if they will be sincere and share it. Some young people and generations around 40/50 years old also are taught the same thing but more people try to „rebel" against the old-fashioned way of thinking, especially when they travel and see more people, the world.

The issue between generations is usually also about understanding workload. Usually, older generations have more physical jobs than newer generations. It's harder to explain to an elder person what it means to work mental-work all day, it might seem as if „you are not working at all, you are only sitting next to a computer, so what do you do?" Some elder people are more open-minded or curious so they try to understand the difference but still in many cases you can hear elder people saying „New generation is full of everything, they don't do anything". They mean that the younger generation doesn't try hard enough to work to have money, a career or a lifestyle as it's supposed to be according to Lithuanian standards (car, flat/house, family by around 28 years old).