



future  chair

*Assifero*

# **Future Chair**

## **PHILANTHROPY**

### **FOR INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE**

#### *Introduction*

Just over half of the world's population is under 30 years old. But if we look country by country, continent by continent, the situation changes: Africa has an average age of 18.8, Asia and South America around 32 while Europe reaches 44. Going into detail, Italy ranks as one of the oldest states in the world, with an average age of around 47. In this context, it is hard for young people to find meaningful spaces to express their opinions and be heard. They are not enabled and empowered to influence public policies and bring their point of view to the tables where decisions are taken. All too often, abilities remain assessed according to age and not to competences, skills and lived experiences. To redress this imbalance, a cultural change needs to be ignited.

To this aim, Assifero brings the issue of intergenerational dialogue, as well as other crucial issues of our time, to the attention of Italian foundations and philanthropic organisations and proposes an engagement process that starting from information, interiorization and integration at the level of each organisation will take to specific behaviours and actions.

In line with international law and the principles enshrined by the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, young people have much to say and offer: from raising awareness and acting on the causes they care about most, to bringing new competences and skills, ideas and points of view.

Actively involving young people in the various decision-making levels and spheres of influence can bring several significant benefits to organisations and can help to more effectively address the root causes of the problems that philanthropy wants to solve. Young people are experts and can be an active part of the solutions, not only for issues concerning their age group but for any major challenge society is facing.

Philanthropic foundations at the international level are questioning themselves on this issue and have recently started to adopt innovative practices of involvement, implication and participation of young people in the decision-making and strategic processes of their organisations. On this matter, we wish to highlight Philea's publication "[Child and Youth Participation in Philanthropy : Stories of Transformation](#)" May 2022 and "[A funders toolkit for child and youth participation](#)", published in September 2022 by Elevate Children Funders Group.

Based on the work and experiences done at the international level, Assifero promotes the following commitment. It consists of six principles that the Italian foundations and philanthropic organisations undertake to pursue, with the support of Assifero.



## *Principles*

- **Promote and create spaces for dialogue and debate**

We are committed to promoting and creating safe spaces for a mutually respectful, open, and meaningful dialogue and a peer-to-peer exchange with young people within the organization's processes and programmes and its decision-making bodies.

- **Removing obstacles and ensuring enabling conditions**

We are committed to removing obstacles, including those of a socio-economic nature, and to ensuring enabling conditions for young people to participate and express their views, overcoming stereotypes and prejudices based on age freely and meaningfully.

- **Promoting a culture of active listening at all levels**

We are committed to raising awareness among the governance, staff and all the stakeholders of the organisations to actively listen to young people's views. We are committed to supporting the capacity building of the skills necessary, both of adults and the youngest, to meaningfully interact.

- **Taking into account and following up**

We are committed to taking into account and following up on the ideas and views expressed by young people, if possible, in an ongoing and structured way, consciously addressing any cultural norms or barriers that may be in the way. We are committed to reconsidering our organization's internal decision-making processes so that they can be geared towards active and meaningful participation of young people.

- **Communicating achievements**

We are committed to publicly inform about the development of the processes put in place and the results achieved, to comply with the principles subscribed to in this declaration.

- **Promoting the principles**

We are committed to promoting these principles and the value of intergenerational dialogue with any stakeholder.

## **THE FUTURE CHAIR INITIATIVE**

We pledge, as the first tangible and immediately implementable act in the process behind the implementation of all the principles expressed above, to leave an empty chair, called a 'Future Chair', at every board meeting table and panel, to symbolise the absence of young people at decision-making tables and the importance of considering the impact that each decision may have on current and future generations.