

Bundesarbeits-
gemeinschaft der
Seniorenorganisationen



bagso

Position Paper

Protecting the climate – an intergenerational task for tomorrow's world

Content

Introduction	3
1. Consistently implementing the 2030 Agenda	4
2. Promoting climate protection at the local level	5
3. Expanding public transport sustainably	6
4. Funding climate-friendly technologies	6
5. Ensuring social participation and social justice	7
6. Strengthening climate-conscious consumption	7
7. Realising more climate protection in welfare services and in older people's organisations	8
8. Exploring new ways of cooperation across generations	9

Introduction

Older people feel a shared responsibility for the future of our planet. If we want to leave a thriving, peaceful and biologically diverse world behind for future generations, we need to take urgent action. Already today, biodiversity is dramatically decreasing, forests are being permanently destroyed and marine ecosystems are suffering. The frequency of extreme weather events such as storms, heat and heavy rain has increased year after year, causing severe damage worldwide and leading to fires or flooding as well as food scarcity and famine. The long-term impact: Entire regions are being rendered uninhabitable, distribution conflicts, wars and migration are the consequences, and the poorest will be hit the hardest.

The ecological crisis is inextricably linked to social and economic challenges, for sustainability must not come at the expense of those who are already marginalised and disadvantaged. We all need a prospect of life in dignity, free of war and violence.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that we can only overcome the great challenges of our time through global cooperation. And at the same time, it reveals what our destructive approach to natural resources is leading to: Many researchers see a connection between the emergence of pandemics and our approach to natural resources, making the transfer of diseases from animals to humans more likely.¹

National efforts alone are therefore not sufficient, yet they are indispensable. We must not let our actions depend on whether others also do their share. No one should be able to make excuses for inaction. For this transformation to succeed, more than a change in our individual lifestyle is required. Politics and the business community must set new frameworks and also redefine growth. After all, ecological stability is a necessary prerequisite for economic success and social justice.

There is broad public consensus that environmental and climate protection have to be our top priority.² This decade will be crucial in setting the right course and truly putting words into action.³

Creating a viable – sustainable – world is an intergenerational task and perhaps the greatest challenge of the current decade.⁴ From global to local, from the United Nations to Europe, from municipalities to neighbourhoods: Every level must make its contribution. And so must all generations. This is only possible by working together and through dialogue between all those involved.

BAGSO, the German National Association of Senior Citizens' Organisations, wishes to encourage older persons in particular to face up to the necessary changes and to make their personal contribution.

1. Consistently implementing the 2030 Agenda

In September 2015, the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda and thus agreed on 17 common goals for socially, economically and ecologically sustainable development. In addition to the Paris Climate Agreement, these so-called Sustainable Development Goals⁵ are the most important guiding principles for our actions in the years to come. The goals include the global fight against poverty and hunger, better access to education, more gender equality and reduced inequalities. They also include sustainable consumption and climate protection, the central idea being: "Leave no one behind". BAGSO explicitly commits to the sustainability goals of the 2030 Agenda in its guiding principles.⁶

In association with other civil society organisations, BAGSO is working at national and international level to increase the pressure on politicians, businesses and society to achieve these goals. The revision and continuous development of the German Sustainable Development Strategy and the submission of voluntary national reports at international level are important steps on this path. Nonetheless, we should also be self-critical in analysing where we can do better.

We expect politicians to strive for international coordination, but we must also become proactive in our own country. In its ruling of 24 March 2021,

the Federal Constitutional Court held the Federal Government accountable: The Climate Protection Act has to be amended because it lacks adequate requirements for the reduction of emissions as of 2031. In its reasoning, the court held that today's climate-harming CO₂ emissions would violate the civil liberties of future generations.⁷

Against this backdrop, the goals of the 2030 Agenda have not yet been sufficiently anchored as overarching guidelines in the political ministries. BAGSO therefore demands:

- All future legislative projects and measures should be subject to a sustainability review.
- Germany must make a quantifiable contribution to preventing climate collapse.
- Civil society must unconditionally be involved in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. By the same token, citizens, politicians and industry are called upon to develop new and sustainable ideas.
- Some of the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda do not sufficiently take into account the needs and circumstances of older people. The available data base, which is used to underpin and measure the success of the Sustainable Development Goals, is insufficient and needs to be improved. In many national statistics, data on the living situation of older people is missing.⁸

2. Promoting climate protection at the local level

Municipalities need to develop smart strategies in order to protect the climate and ecosystems while at the same time mitigating the health and social impacts of climate change. They are the places where new and sustainable models of living can and must be explored. This includes the establishment of an infrastructure of short distances: Neighbourhoods where work, housing and shopping facilities are close to one another help avoid long commutes and journeys by car⁹. Communal forms of housing with several generations living under one roof should also be promoted, because they consume fewer resources compared to the increasing number of small or single households.

Such new living and neighbourhood models not only protect the climate, but can also improve people's quality of life.

Moreover, urban development planning must take climate change into account to a greater extent than in the past. More green spaces, for example, cool the air on hot days and store rainwater that otherwise runs off unused on sealed ground surfaces. Green roofs and vertical vegetation should be used more, and additional trees need to be planted. Bodies of water, too, provide cooling and a better air exchange. Fresh air corridors need to be taken into account and sources of water and shade have to be provided.

Cities must draw up heat action plans, such as those currently being developed in Cologne¹⁰, to better prepare people for hot spells.

The public sector has a role model function to play – and thus also a key responsibility when it comes to waste prevention. Disposable products should be dispensed with completely in civic institutions. Municipal enterprises must attach greater importance to durability and the avoidance of packaging waste in their procurements. By doing so, cities and municipalities give important impetus to the business community.¹¹

In urban planning, the health and social implications of climate change are playing an increasingly important role. Climate change puts a great strain on all generations.¹² More frequent heat waves and tropical nights can be physically demanding, especially for older people as well as infants and young children. Furthermore, people of a lower socioeconomic status tend to be more affected by environmental impacts. They are more frequently exposed to traffic- and industry-related health impacts from noise and air pollutants and have fewer opportunities for exercise and recreation.

These social inequalities can be reduced through an ecological transition in transport, a policy of short distances, and the expansion of public transport.

3. Expanding public transport sustainably

The transport sector is a major contributor to climate change. Although technology has advanced and modern engines have become more efficient, the amount of greenhouse gases emitted by the traffic sector has not significantly changed since 1990.¹³ This is due to our increased mobility: On the roads, an increasing number of heavier cars are covering ever longer distances.

In order to achieve a transition to climate-friendly transport, various mobility options must be further developed and meaningfully combined: This includes public transport, publicly co-funded car sharing offers, and the strengthening of pedestrian and bicycle traffic (e.g. through better bike lanes).¹⁴ By digitally linking these different services, seamless door-to-door mobility, which is particularly important for older people, would also be possible within the scope of an environmentally sustainable network.

In many German regions, local public transport is not sufficiently developed. Structural differences that are thus exacerbated between urban and rural areas must be eliminated. BAGSO therefore demands:

- Public local transport must be affordable for all.
- Digital and offline route planning, ticket purchase, stations as well as entry/exit points have to be accessible to all, regardless of individual physical, sensory or cognitive abilities and financial possibilities.

- Access to local public transport and mobility services must not pose insurmountable hurdles for anyone.
- New, flexible solutions need to be found for particularly difficult spatial conditions and gaps in mobility chains.

4. Funding climate-friendly technologies

There should be no more new investments in fossil fuels – this has now also been called for by the International Energy Agency (IEA).¹⁵ Germany, as a location for innovation, must set a good example in this respect. This means:

- Wind and solar power must be consistently expanded, and the development of efficient technologies be further promoted.
- The climate-friendly conversion of houses, flats, and public buildings and facilities should be supported and promoted in a targeted way even more than in the past.

When focusing on more energy-efficient forms of housing and technologies, the needs of older people should be taken into account, as they spend more time at home than younger generations. They use more heating and electricity and are therefore much more affected by rising energy costs. Especially when it comes to older persons, this means that end consumers, too, need to benefit from cost savings through increased energy efficiency.

Many annuity and pension funds, life and old-age insurance schemes, as well as occupational pension plans continue to invest heavily in fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas) and nuclear energy.¹⁶ Financial security in old age thus comes at the expense of the environment. This has to be changed. We demand that pension and annuity funds no longer invest in fossil energies and that investors be informed about alternatives.¹⁷

5. Ensuring social participation and social justice

KClimate and environmental protection are a prerequisite for ensuring social justice and social participation in the long run. At the same time, societies with a sound social structure and low inequality are the best prerequisite for sustainable livelihoods.

Poverty in old age is mostly based on lifelong social inequality, which is perpetuated in old age. Therefore, equal opportunities for young people must already be established in childhood and adolescence. Good living in all phases of one's life includes affordable housing, an attractive and healthy living environment with good services and infrastructure close to home, accessible social, health and care services, as well as adequate cultural and educational opportunities.

Climate and environmental protection and social challenges are in constant correlation. Ecological improvements must be continuously assessed for their social impacts. They must not lead to new unequal distributions of environmental

burdens and resources or reinforce existing environmental injustices. If certain products become more expensive due to carbon taxation, the revenue from such taxation must be distributed or reinvested in a socially compatible way.

For society to change, the gap between sustainability requirements and day-to-day life must not be too wide. This would place an additional burden on many older people, as they are partly dependent on resource-intensive support. Persons that are physically, socially or financially disadvantaged often have less scope for decision-making in favour of a sustainable lifestyle.

An environmentally harmful economic system and lifestyle have to become more expensive, e.g. through appropriate taxation. At the same time, the costs of transformation must be shared fairly to avoid burdening the most vulnerable or becoming an excuse for reluctance and procrastination.

6. Strengthening climate-conscious consumption

Many older people want to do their share to protect the climate. Every person can do something, even in small ways, to ensure a responsible use of limited resources. The number of those who seek to actively make a change is growing. They show that climate-conscious consumption does not have to mean sacrifice: Buying food locally and in season, reducing meat and milk consumption, cooking home-made meals,

using leftovers, repairing instead of buying new, and thereby preserving resources – many older people still remember this practice from their childhood.

However, promoting climate-conscious consumption requires more than merely each individual's responsibility. Industry must be obliged to consider sustainability in production, e.g. by developing and manufacturing repair-friendly appliances. Recycling must be taken into account during the process of designing products and selecting materials to ensure that a truly circular economy becomes possible. Policymakers should support the consumption of sustainable goods and products through targeted tax and financial incentives.

7. Realising more climate protection in welfare services and in older people's organisations

In older people's organisations and service provision for older people, too, we can increase our efforts to protect the climate and the environment. This starts on a small scale in organisations and associations: We can make meetings and events – including those of BAGSO – more environmentally friendly, e.g. by providing local conference catering or by refraining from using promotional items that were neither produced sustainably nor serve a long-term purpose.

Not least, digitalisation offers many opportunities for older people's organisations: Digital events that do not require all participants to travel to the venue save energy, money and time.

For this, accessible and affordable modern forms of communication must be made available throughout Germany. However, the following also holds true, especially for older people: Digital meetings cannot replace personal contact.

Welfare facilities for older people as well as associations, organisations and their individual members should optimise their equipment, processes and procedures with a view to environmental and climate protection and also bring about a change in their organisational culture. This may start with switching to green electricity or changing the communal catering to seasonal produce. The use of reusable materials, the central procurement of environmentally friendly care products or the reduction of paper consumption in the administration also significantly contribute to an improved ecobalance.

The same is true for outpatient care: On their way from one patient to the next, caregivers are usually dependent on the car. The shift to e-mobility represents a step in the right direction. In urban settings in particular, some outpatient care services are already using e-bikes as an additional means of transport.

The transition to environmentally and climate-friendly processes is an important management task. Sustainable development and the careful use of existing resources must be included in the training and further education of professional caregivers and healthcare professionals as well as social workers.

8. Exploring new ways of cooperation across generations

Climate change will mainly affect those who are young today, as well as all future generations. But even today, we are already experiencing the consequences.

Until now, we have not seen a conflict between the generations, but rather increased cooperation.¹⁸ Young and old work together to embrace change and to give environmental and climate protection the highest priority in the years to come. BAGSO supports the great engagement of younger people who protest, campaign, and fight for sound climate protection policies. It also invites older people to actively participate and get involved, a process that is both encouraging and challenging. The common, intergenerational dialogue and mutual learning are more important today than ever before. After all, securing the future foundations of life is at stake.

Older people can greatly contribute to the transition towards a sustainable world. They feel responsible for the future of coming generations and wish to leave behind a liveable world. In many areas, they are already putting the desired changes into practice: Many older people are role models when it comes to practising a resource-friendly lifestyle.¹⁹ Older generations are inviting younger ones to jointly develop new ideas for better climate protection and to fight for change.

Decent living conditions, peace, the safeguarding of democracy and human rights, as well as the preservation of our livelihoods are crucial for our very existence. These basic values must have the highest priority.

A good life in older age is only possible if the needs of all generations are taken into account. After all, the youth of today are the older generations of tomorrow. No matter whether people are now 70, 45 or 17 years old: They should join forces and courageously develop and implement new ideas for tomorrow's world.

This position paper was developed based on a draft by the expert commission on engagement and participation and adopted by the BAGSO board in June 2021.

- 1 See Pörtner, H.O., Scholes, R.J. et al. (2021): IPBES-IPCC co-sponsored workshop, Report on biodiversity and climate change; IPBES and IPCC: https://www.ipbes.net/sites/default/files/2021-06/20210609_workshop_report_embargo_3pm_CEST_10_june_o.pdf (retrieved on 24 June 2021)
- 2 In a representative poll conducted in 2020 by the Federal Environment Ministry and the Federal Environment Agency, 65% of respondents considered environmental and climate protection a very important issue: <https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/daten/private-haushalte-konsum/umweltbewusstsein-umweltverhalten/#stellenwert-des-umwelt-und-klimaschutzes> (retrieved on 14 May 2021)
- 3 In its paper "Die Debatte um den Klimaschutz – Mythen, Fakten, Argumente" [*The debate on climate protection – myths, facts, arguments*] (2020), the Wuppertal Institute summarises the most important fields of action and formulates corresponding demands: <https://wupperinst.org/fa/redaktion/downloads/publications/Klimaschutz-Debatte.pdf> (retrieved on 2 June 2021)
- 4 "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (1987): "Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future" (Brundtland Report), chapter 2
- 5 <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/themen/nachhaltigkeitspolitik/nachhaltigkeitsziele-verstaendlich-erklaert-232174> (retrieved on 2 June 2021)
- 6 <https://www.bagso.de/die-bagso/leitsaetze-der-bagso/> (retrieved on 14 May 2021)
- 7 See https://www.bundesverfassungsgericht.de/ers20210324_1bvr265618.html (retrieved on 14 May 2021)
- 8 See HelpAge Deutschland e.V. (2018): "Agenda 2030 – Globales Altern und die Ziele für nachhaltige Entwicklung" [*2030 Agenda – Global Ageing and the Sustainable Development Goals*]: <https://cdn.helpage.de/media/helpage-agenda-2030-web1710-1010/dY4M3bfAhE8opH6rya3d19QEP053MnCcGUMdgbEG.pdf> (retrieved on 14 May 2021)
- 9 See German Environment Agency (2011): "Leitkonzept – Stadt und Region der kurzen Wege" [*Guiding concept – A city and region of short distances*]: <https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/sites/default/files/medien/461/publikationen/4151.pdf> (retrieved on 14 May 2021)
- 10 See German Environment Agency [*Umweltbundesamt*] (2020): <https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/gesund-durch-den-sommer-in-der-stadt#stadt-koln-als-vorreiter-beim-gesundheitlichen-hitzeschutz> (retrieved on 2 June 2021)
- 11 Municipalities and cities are increasingly paying attention to sustainability in public procurement. The city of Munich, for instance, has set out to become a "Zero Waste City": <https://wupperinst.org/a/wi/als/ad/4901> (retrieved on 2 June 2021)
- 12 See United Nations General Assembly (2021): "Analytical study on the promotion and protection of the rights of older persons in the context of climate change": <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/47/46> (retrieved on 28 May 2021)
- 13 See German Environment Agency: <https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/daten/verkehr/fahrleistungen-verkehr-saufwand-modal-split#fahrleistung-im-personen-und-guterverkehr> and <https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/daten/verkehr/emissionen-des-verkehrs#pkw-fahren-heute-klima-und-umweltvertraglicher> (both retrieved on 25 June 2021)
- 14 See Heinrich Böll Foundation (2020): "Praxis kommunale Verkehrswende – ein Leitfaden" [*A practical guide to more sustainable mobility at the local level*]: https://epub.wupperinst.org/frontdoor/deliver/index/docId/7537/file/7537_Verkehrswende.pdf (retrieved on 2 June 2021)
- 15 See <https://www.zeit.de/wirtschaft/2021-05/internationale-energieagentur-nullemissionsziel-2050-klimapolitik-gas-oel> or <https://www.energiezukunft.eu/wirtschaft/die-lange-kehrtwende-der-iea/> (retrieved on 2 June 2021)

- 16 As part of the project "Gut fürs Geld, gut fürs Klima" [*Good for your money, good for the climate*], the Bremen consumer association examined 46 providers of private pension insurance with regard to their sustainability standards (2017): <https://www.geld-bewegt.de/wissen/geld-versicherungen/nachhaltige-geldanlage/nur-wenige-rentenversicherungen-konsequent-nachhaltig> (retrieved on 14 May 2021). Facing Finance e.V. has analysed Riester pension plans and their contribution to sustainability in cooperation with the consumer associations Bremen and North Rhine-Westphalia (2018): https://www.geld-bewegt.de/sites/default/files/2018-10/2018_F%C3%BCr%20eine%20faire%20Rente.pdf (retrieved on 14 May 2021)
- 17 In its position paper published in 2021, the Federation of German Consumer Organisations (Verbraucherzentrale Bundesverband e.V.) calls for a systematic rethinking, which is also reflected in a changed advisory and information strategy regarding sustainable investments: https://www.vzbv.de/sites/default/files/downloads/2021/02/11/positionspapier_vzbv_nachhaltige_geldanlagen.pdf (retrieved on 14 May 2021)
- 18 German Environment Agency (2021): "25 Jahre Umweltbewusstseinsforschung im Umweltressort. Langfristige Entwicklungen und aktuelle Ergebnisse" [*25 Years of Environmental Awareness Research in the Federal Environment Ministry. Long-term developments and current results*]: https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/sites/default/files/medien/5750/publikationen/2021_hgp_umweltbewusstseinsstudie_bf.pdf (retrieved on 25 June 2021); Umweltbundesamt (2021): "Tabellenband Repräsentativumfrage zum Umweltbewusstsein und Umweltverhalten im Jahr 2020 – Auszug der Tabellen" [*Summary of tables: Representative survey on environmental awareness and behaviour in the year 2020 – excerpt of the tables*]: https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/sites/default/files/medien/2378/dokumente/ubs_2020_tabellenband_auszug_25_jahre_ubs.pdf (retrieved on 25 June 2021); Umweltbundesamt (2018): "Umweltbewusstsein in Deutschland 2018" [*Environmental awareness in Germany 2018*]: https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/sites/default/files/medien/1410/publikationen/ubs2018_-_m_3.3_basisdatenbroschuere_barrierefrei-02_cps_bf.pdf (retrieved on 14 May 2021)
- 19 See Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment and Energy (2020): "ReUse und Secondhand in Deutschland – Einstellungen zur Abfallvermeidung und Nachhaltigkeit" [*ReUse and Secondhand in Germany – Attitudes towards waste avoidance and sustainability*]; https://epub.wupperinst.org/frontdoor/deliver/index/docId/7656/file/7656_ReUse_Secondhand.pdf (retrieved on 14 May 2021)

Funded by:



Federal Ministry for
Family Affairs, Senior Citizens,
Women and Youth

Published by

BAGSO
Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft
der Seniorenorganisationen e.V.
German National Association of
Senior Citizens' Organisations

Noeggerathstr. 49, 53111 Bonn
Germany

Tel.: +49 (0)228 / 24 99 93-0
Fax: +49 (0)228 / 24 99 93-20
kontakt@bagso.de
www.bagso.de

BAGSO – The voice of older people

BAGSO, the German National Association of Senior Citizens' Organisations, represents the interests of older generations in Germany. It stands up for active, healthy and selfdetermined ageing in social security. BAGSO is an umbrella organisation of about 125 civil society organisations that are run by or work for older people.

In a colourful and diverse society, BAGSO promotes a differentiated image of old age. This includes both the various opportunities arising from longer lives as well as times of vulnerability and the need for care.

BAGSO calls on politicians, society and businesses to offer conditions that allow for a good and dignified life in older age – in Germany, Europe and worldwide.

At the United Nations, BAGSO is actively involved in the development of a UN Convention for Older People. BAGSO is also a member of the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People (GAROP), an international alliance of over 200 civil society organisations that advocates for the rights of older people. BAGSO's Secretariat for International Policy on Ageing provides information on current international developments in ageing policy and contributes the interests of civil society to international processes.