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Solidarity through collaborative research Advocating open science, accessible education and innovation

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“None of us got where we are solely by pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps. We got here because somebody (...) bent down and helped us pick up our boots.” (Thurgood Marshall)

In my view, the problem of solidarity can be approached from two different perspectives:

- ✚ Solidarity emerging from the **homogeneity** of the individuals is based on common interests, standards and objectives or, in some cases, kinship and sympathies. Therefore, it can be established only between individuals that share the same academic background or have the same religious and political orientation. Generally speaking, this type of solidarity manages to establish connections between groups of people that are driven by the exact same aims.
- ✚ On the other hand, **heterogeneous solidarity** is characterized by tolerance to diversity and openness in accepting people’s different life

goals, ambitions and values. This is a concept with an emphasis on universality, unity and integration of contrasting, yet complementary objectives. In my view, solidarity should be a matter of unrestricted access and a form of social cohesion that binds people together as one, irrespective of other aspects. For me, solidarity is an inner desire of reaching universal progression and breaking down barriers commonly put by mankind. And what better way to dissolve those barriers than to embrace the differences and make this the engine of changing the world we all live in into a better place?

Over the years, several studies have shown that the majority of civilized countries manifest a high tolerance to diversity and, moreover, use it in their own advantage. To my mind, a heterogeneous environment produces better results than a single-minded group formed of members having the same social and

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psychological structure. That is due to the fact that differences are prone to generate contrasting ideas that will eventually fuel the creative process leading to innovation-the key to society's evolution. Just imagine: high-class experts and ambitious enthusiasts from different expertise areas working together and supporting each other in making groundbreaking discoveries. The only price mankind has to pay in order to reach this goal is solidarity.

The Council of the European Union has always been concerned with providing Member States with the financial resources required by extensive scientific research and creating the optimum conditions for innovation. The difficult part is not finding investors who are willing to support one's experimental work but making all information accessible to a large audience and facilitating content-mining. Over the years, the European Union managed to promote free of charge usage of research publications and encourage the member states in adopting an 'open-access' policy, making it clear for everyone that society's progression would not be possible without a sustainable system of education.

Even though the latest statistics show an increasing number of countries that implemented research-friendly policies so that users from different Member States can easily access their websites and publish, in return, their feedback and additional information, the evolution process towards open science is slow. Hence, the European Commission is working hard on implementing open-source science so

that everyone can easily access and re-use all types of data, which will eventually lead to innovation and performance. In my opinion, this type of transparent and collaborative research is the absolute statement of solidarity and mutual help and I profoundly admire the initiative of creating such a profitable environment where amateurs and professionals from different fields can publicly share their knowledge and expertise.

One form of solidarity within the European Union concerning the open-science is the Creative Commons license. This enables the free distribution of a copyrighted work so that other users can easily share and utilize research materials as long as they respect the conditions embodied in the license. This way, scientists from different Member States can publish their work on specialized platforms without any concerns regarding the copyright infringement. Moreover, young enthusiasts can find solid guidance throughout their studies and eventually reach their full potential. Nowadays, only a quarter of scientists choose to submit their observations and conclusions regarding problems of major interest such as global warming and migration, which explains the low level of global awareness and the lack of implication in the research sector. When it comes to education and innovation, sharing is indeed caring. This is why solidarity plays such an important role when distributing research materials and, most importantly, doing it cost-free. I believe that open-source licenses are a viable option in the context of meeting

European Union's need for constant development and accessibility of information.

Solidarity also means permitting access to all types of research materials, irrespective of their source. For instance, there are some very restrictive institutions of high education that allow only their students to access University's archives and documentation, while others are very transparent and publish their case studies on websites so that everyone interested can easily access the qualitative content. I sincerely applaud the initiative I previously mentioned and hope that, at some point in the future, I will see universities uploading their courses online and transmitting their seminars live, so that every individual can have access to education, regardless of his/her financial situation. It is generally acknowledged that more and more youngsters give up on the idea of going to university since the annual fee is unlikely to be covered by their parents' earnings. Thanks to the great development made in technology, all these problems can be resolved by creating a software that allows passionate teachers and lecturers to upload content online and enable children to learn cost-free and not feel excluded from the educational system. Solidarity and good intentions are, after all, the engine of scientific discovery and accessible education.

Open science would be impossible to implement without a viable computation that addresses the problem of reproducibility and re-purpose of scientific results. Moving from proprietary software to open-source software is the major change companies within the European Union

have to make in order to sustain the concept of open science and make it a reality. The problem with solidarity is that the EU Member States have to choose between increasing their income and making a contribution to the society's wealth and progress. In my opinion, a wise individual would have no difficulty in choosing between these two since collective success is always stronger than individual brilliance.

Mediocrity can never lead to memorable discoveries. This is the exact reason why our society needs ambitious, devoted people who deliver nothing but performance and excellence. Programs such as **Horizon 2020**, aim to support individuals' intellectual ambitions and ensure constant competitiveness. In my view, there is no better way to secure my generation future than to invest in education and make solidarity the foundation base of development.

Solidarity is not only the key to reducing social exclusion, but also the engine of increasing the employment rate. It is not mandatory for a person to hold a university degree in order to be successful and enter the job market. Occupations such as home health aide, computer network support specialist and subway operator only require a high-school degree, without any further specialization. The problem is that individuals that haven't finished any form of higher education no longer feel welcomed in the workforce since most of the jobs offered by governments are oriented towards people who hold a bachelor and, in some cases, a master's degree. In my opinion, there is an increasing need of showing solidarity

and providing all categories of people with employment so that every person can contribute, in one way or another, to the well-being and economic growth of this planet. There is importance in every job and it is sad to see that way too often employees lack an understanding of how impactful each position is to the overall picture of a company. Social solidarity can only be maintained through the interdependence of its component parts, which illustrates the need of both degree and non-degree jobs. Researchers are not necessarily scientists or students that have graduated prestigious universities, but normal people whose training, expertise and intelligence can eventually change the world. The European Union is currently offering researcher jobs to people who want to revolutionize science. This way, enthusiasts from Member States can easily apply for such positions without having to worry about any bachelor's degree.

When it comes to solidarity and its most impressive effects within the European Union is impossible not to mention **Erasmus+ program** and all its positive influences on education, research and innovation. Intercultural cooperation enables students to enrich their academic perspective and reach performance in their area of expertise. By immersing in a new culture, they have the unique opportunity to improve their job prospect by working on their language skills and also to obtain an internship. This way, youngsters can easily enter the job market, given the fact that they have already completed a traineeship for a company abroad.

Moreover, they are encouraged to show solidarity and cooperate more with European countries by sharing their knowledge so that their collaborative research data can sustain qualitative experimental work and ultimately lead to innovation. Also, vocational training and courses are not excluded, since the European Union is ensuring the most accessible form of education for people who want to specialize and enter the workforce right after high school.

Another proof of European solidarity is **EPALE-a** site where trainers, academics, policy-makers and teachers support the collaborative research sector within the EU and share their expertise concerning adult learning. By registering to this platform, professionals across Europe have the opportunity to exchange teaching materials, ideas and thoughts on how to develop adult learning and eventually lower the unemployment rate by providing seniors with the skills required by the labor market. Moreover, experts have created a "Collaborative Space" that offers a private area on EPAL where teachers can set-up projects and create networking opportunities with other Member States. Thanks to the European Union's regulations and similar projects, professionals are now able to innovate and provide adults with the required knowledge of re-entering the workplace.

Solidarity can also be defined as a sense of equality-a universal fairness in helping deprived categories achieve their goals. The European Union commits to ensuring equal access to **Erasmus** experiences, so that individuals would

not feel excluded from such unique opportunities. Hence, if a person suffers from a physical or mental health condition, extra funding offered by the government is available. This way, additional fees required by medical equipment, learning assistance and special requirements regarding the accommodation and diet, are all covered and financed through the European Program.

Pursuing solidarity is, after all, the only way our society can evolve towards perfection and

stability. Ultimately, what is more powerful than tolerance and a strong goodwill? When people from all different backgrounds come together with a collective intention, magic truly happens. When ignorance and selfish, individual interests are replaced by humanity and generous actions, people witness innovation. When solidarity becomes the tool to integration and unity, prosperity and success will surely follow.



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