



vzw Grootouders voor het Klimaat (Belgium)

New Year's message to the politicians

9 January 2022



Dear politicians,

Not all grandparents are old, but all grandparents have grandchildren. That is why we are writing this letter. We, grandparents, are concerned for the future of our grandchildren and for the future of all grandchildren, everywhere in the world.

This letter is addressed to you. Which is only logical. We, along with all our fellow adult citizens elected you. We elected you because we expect responsible policies from you. We want you to at least try to tackle the major problems of this country and of our time.

Note that we don't expect you to solve it. One cannot solve big problems in an instant. Proposing simple solutions only makes the problems worse. They are already too big as it is. We want you to see the problems and work on solutions. Day and night if necessary.

You know as well as we the problem of our time. Not the only problem, certainly not, but the biggest one. The earth is getting too hot for the children of men. Not only is the earth getting too hot, but it is heating up at lightning speed. There is not much time left if we want to prevent our blue planet from becoming uninhabitable for everyone. And that is not what we want.

We admit it straight away: we grandparents have made a mess of things over the past half century. It's not that we had bad intentions. Rather, we misunderstood the warning signs. We firmly believed that technical progress would eventually solve all the problems. We cherished our comfortable life. And now look: our globe seems to be bewitched.

Grandchildren still have many years to live on earth. As do you. We have a lot less. We are not so much concerned about our own future. But we are very concerned about those who will come after us.

Which is why we expect you to take decisive action. Time is short, do not hesitate, even if you fear that you'll offend broad sections of society. But the measures you take must always be social, that is, they must not push the poorest among us even deeper into poverty. Never. Inequality is glaring enough

as it is. Besides, real solutions must always include all of society: rich, poor and everything in between. If they don't, these solutions will backfire.

It is your responsibility, your duty, your great task, to turn the lives of all of us upside down. Nothing less. Don't sigh and hide behind the smallest of practical obstacles. Let go of the fear-soaked nitpicking at world conferences. Don't get lost in a cloud of quickly evaporating compromises. Discard those old formulations and ways of thinking. Act. Do.

Be aware that the glorious era of the car is over and that the electric car is not the solution.

Dare to strive: not for negative growth (who's the fool who invented that term), but call a spade a spade. Strive for shrinkage. Face up to the devastation that sacred globalisation has caused and continues to cause every day.

We, grandparents, grew up in the firm belief that more is always better. More = better. That the poor are convinced of this is perfectly understandable. Those who don't have enough to live decently want more: no need to spell this out. But for us, in rich Europe, for us, in the super-rich Belgian regions, this arithmetic is outdated. We have to realise that less is better.

We live in fast-moving times. More happens in ten years than used to happen in a century. Which is why it is advisable for all of us, grandparents and politicians alike, to learn from the young.

They want to turn things around. They are taking to the streets. Their protest is being voiced all over the world. Isn't it wonderful, this enthusiasm, this anger? And their amazing skills. Today's youth will not be swayed by a shrug of the shoulders, sarcasm or cynicism. There is too much at stake.

We, grandparents, can only do our utmost to support and encourage them. You, politicians, must do your utmost to turn this youth protest into action. Your actions will come up against gigantic self-interests, immeasurable lies, powerful and systematic resistance. Do not be deterred. Grandparents and the youth support you. In fact, we will drive you forward. Away from the abyss. To a world that will be just liveable.

The time is now.

Get to work.

Information from the editor:

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This is the January 2022 New Year's message to politicians, from Grandparents for Climate. Grandparents ambassador Geert Van Istendael wrote the original text. The production was coordinated by the web editors of the Grandparents. Dan Frett assisted with the translation.



A video version of this New Year's message is available. You can find it on the website of [Grootouders voor het Klimaat](#) and at this [vimeo address](#).

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