

# INTERGENERATIONAL FAIRNESS STRATEGY

Scoping report

EU Policy Lab



## EU Policy Lab

The EU Policy Lab is a space for cross-disciplinary exploration and innovation in policymaking. We apply collaborative, systemic and forward-looking approaches to help bringing the scientific knowledge of the Joint Research Centre into EU policymaking.

We experiment with the new, the unprecedented and the unknown. We seek to augment our understanding of the present, challenge and reinvent the way we think about the future.

The EU Policy Lab is also a mindset and a way of working together that combines stories and data, anticipation and analysis, imagination and action. We bring new practical and radical perspectives to tackle complex problems in a collaborative way. Together, we explore, connect and ideate to create better



[policy-lab.ec.europa.eu](https://policy-lab.ec.europa.eu)

# Contents

Contents.....	3
Executive summary.....	4
Introduction.....	5
Intergenerational fairness – core issues.....	12
Process ideas.....	20
Vision elements.....	21
Lessons learned and next steps.....	22
Annex: Scope of Intergenerational Fairness.....	24

## Executive summary

Commissioner Micallef in his Mission Letter was asked to “prepare a Strategy on Intergenerational Fairness to map out how we can strengthen communication between generations and ensure that interests of present and future generations are respected throughout our policy and law making.”

As intergenerational fairness is a cross-cutting concept, it was decided that the EU Policy Lab of the Joint Research Centre (JRC) would support the framing and the design of an integrated strategy in coordination with Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC) and other relevant services. The choice fell on the EU Policy Lab due to its experience in foresight and innovating the policymaking process through a multidisciplinary approach that connects and harnesses the collective intelligence of various Directorates-General (DGs).

After internal coordination, the co-creation process of the Intergenerational Fairness Strategy started on 20 February 2025. It consists of four phases:

- Scoping – understanding what are the different framings and salient policy issues
- Vision building – envisioning potential futures where intergenerational fairness is achieved
- Strategy ideas – considering various possible policy responses
- Strategy co-creation – creating a coherent strategy and action plan

Building on the UN Pact of the Future and Declaration on Future Generations, the aim of the scoping, which took place between February and April, was to frame the concept of intergenerational fairness in the EU context. A series of workshops with diverse stakeholders, explored the various understandings of intergenerational fairness, the salient issues that need to be addressed, the expectations with respect to the process and final outcome, as well as the aspirations and hopes for an intergenerationally fair EU.

Through this process, we have defined three main themes where intergenerational fairness could shape the future of Europe:

1. Changes in governance and democratic participation to build institutions and legal systems which integrate an intergenerational, long-term perspective for better decision-making and prioritising the well-being of both current and future generations.
2. Addressing the complex and long-term societal challenges through the intergenerational perspective: environmental justice in the face of the triple crisis; responsible innovation; rising inequalities (including housing and cost of living); lifelong education for transition; bridging societal divisions for social cohesion and resilience.
3. Empowering all generations together to help protect vulnerable populations, taking into account the intersectionality of social categories that shape the vulnerabilities. Reinforcing the European Social Model through intergenerational initiatives, life-course approaches and anticipating longer-term and systemic impacts of short-term, targeted interventions.

The scoping stage provided a wide and coherent framing for intergenerational fairness in the EU, considering diverse positions, experiences and interests. The framing created at the scoping stage and the sense of direction given by the visioning stage will contribute to the formulation of strategy ideas.

# Introduction

The Commission's 2024-2029 priorities state that in the wake of “unease in the society,” the EU must ensure “that decisions taken today do not harm to future generations and that there is increased solidarity and engagement between people of different ages.”<sup>1</sup> The responsibility for this work was given to Commissioner Micallef, who in his Mission Letter was asked to “prepare a Strategy on Intergenerational Fairness to map out how we can strengthen communication between generations and ensure that interests of present and future generations are respected throughout our policy and law making.”

This decision followed a similar initiative at the global level, where at the Summit of the Future on 22 September 2024, world leaders adopted the Pact for the Future and its annexes: the Global Digital Compact and Declaration on Future Generations. The latter recognizes the opportunity that present generations possess to fulfil the “commitment to meet the demands of the present in a way that safeguards the needs and interests of future generations, while leaving no one behind”, agreeing a set of guiding principles and commitments to this end.

The EU Policy Lab has been following and supporting the future generations work of the United Nations as well as EU Member States and promoting policy innovation in the Commission. As intergenerational fairness is a cross-cutting concept, it was decided that the EU Policy Lab of the Joint Research Centre (JRC) would support the framing and the design of an integrated strategy in coordination with Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC) and other relevant services. The choice fell on the EU Policy Lab due to its experience in foresight and innovating the policymaking process through a multidisciplinary approach that connects and harnesses the collective intelligence of various Directorates-General (DGs).

Figure 1. Kick-off of the Intergenerational Fairness Strategy process (Pia Ahrenkilde Hansen, Director General – DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Glen Micallef Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport, Bernard Magenmann Acting Director-General – Joint Research Centre)



---

<sup>1</sup> Europe's Choice: Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2024-2029, [Priorities 2024-2029 - European Commission](#)

# The strategy design process

Following the internal exchanges in January, the co-creation process of the Intergenerational Fairness Strategy started on the 20 February 2025. It consists of four phases:

- Scoping – understanding what are the different framings and salient policy issues which are linked to the topic
- Vision building – envisioning potential futures where intergenerational fairness is achieved
- Strategy ideas – considering various possible policy responses to reach a more intergenerationally fair EU
- Strategy co-creation – creating a coherent strategy and action plan that responds to the identified challenges

Figure 2. Strategy creation process timeline

Jan-Apr '25	May-Jun '25	Jun-Sep '25	Oct-Dec '25	Jan-Feb '26	Feb '26
Phase 1 Scoping	Phase 2 Vision building	Phase 3 Strategy ideas	Phase 4 Strategy co-creation	Phase 5 Procedural	Adoption
What exists already? What could it be?  Substantive analysis with stakeholders Key directions: identified themes, challenges & opportunities	What do we want it to be? What for?  Participatory co-creation of possible long-term visions	Functions, values, key needs / requirements  Roadmap  Deepening results with evidence-based science  Policy briefs	What does it look like? Where do we want to go?  Citizens' co-creation	Formal procedures Interservice consultation Translation Communication  Action plan, including community roll out	College
Ongoing participatory activities					

The process of creating an EU strategy document through an open and inclusive approach relies on four new ways of collaborating: engaging external stakeholders from the outset; connecting the silos within the Commission services, leveraging science and foresight throughout the process; and building global connections.

The process engages external stakeholders right from the outset to co-create a strategic vision and inform the strategy accordingly, through listening to diverse voices and ensuring that policy reflects on-the-ground realities.

Connecting the silos is needed to tackle a complex multi-faceted issue such as intergenerational fairness and co-create more coherent and effective policies for tangible impact. To this end, the



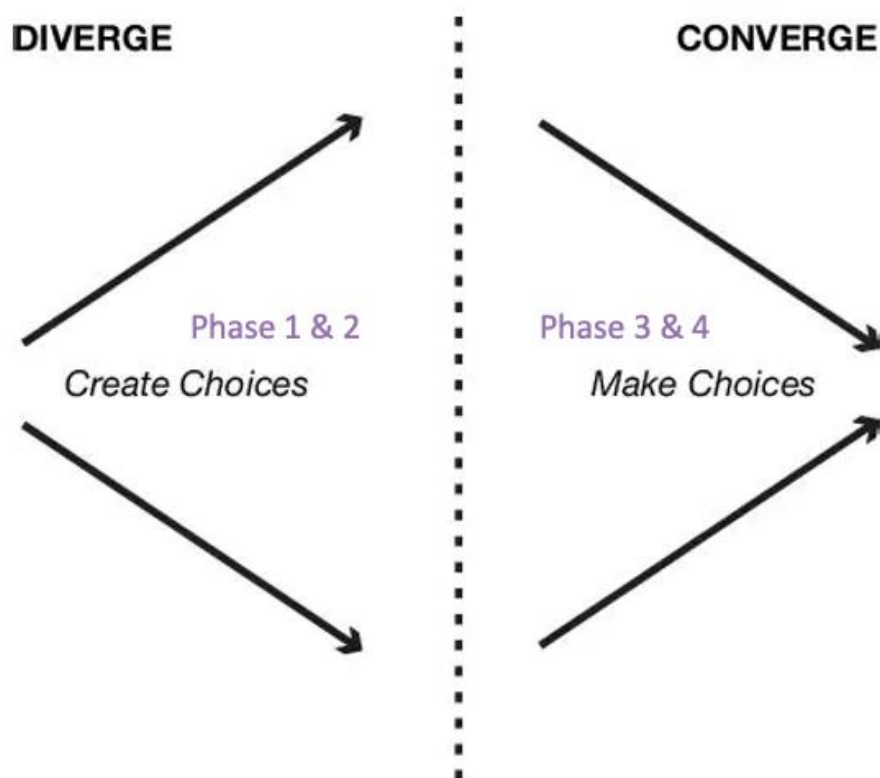
process brings together different teams and experts from across the European Commission (DGs and agencies) to create a common, comprehensive strategy.

Involvement of the Joint Research Centre and external experts in the process serves to leverage science and foresight to anticipate the future. To ensure we are building our policy on the full range of available evidence and identify the long-term impacts of a policy, the project will be supported by wide range of experts who can provide scientific evidence in the relevant areas, including fairness, preparedness and resilience, wellbeing, sustainability, democracy, public administration, evidence-informed policymaking and demographic challenges.

Finally, fostering a future-oriented governance based on partnerships and global collaboration allows us to connect to and help shape a global approach to intergenerational fairness. It will also improve cooperation and learning from key global players to share knowledge, ideas, and resources.

While the scoping and visioning phases of the process are expected to widen the scope of the framing of the topic, so that all the issues that are important for citizens can be taken into consideration, the strategy ideas and co-creation will converge on impactful actions.

Figure 3. Diverging and converging phases of the process



## Scoping phase

Building on the UN Pact of the Future and Declaration on Future Generations, the aim of the scoping, which took place between February and April, was to frame the concept of intergenerational fairness in the EU context. A series of workshops with diverse stakeholders explored the various understandings of intergenerational fairness, the salient issues that need to be addressed, the expectations with respect to the process, as well as the aspirations and hopes for an intergenerationally fair EU.

Two participatory workshops with stakeholders were organised (physical and online) attracting around 250 participants. The outcomes of these sessions provided the main input into the scoping. These workshops were followed up by a series of consultations with young citizens at the EU Youth Conference in Lublin, Poland, the EU Youth Stakeholders Group and with students at College of Europe in Bruges.

Figure 4. Youth Stakeholder Group workshop



Additional workshops were organised within the Commission's Joint Research Centre, bringing together the diverse in-house research which could support the Intergenerational Fairness Strategy. There was also a workshop with external experts, who formulated potential actions and ambitions that could be part of the strategy.

In parallel, participatory sessions with Commission policy officers from various Directorates-General were organised to scope out the links between the topic of intergenerational fairness and the current and future activities in various policy areas: demography (children, youth policy, aging); economic and social (fiscal policy, the European semester, pensions, health, energy, mobility, housing, employment); research; digital; environment and climate; food and agriculture, regional and city, education, skills and culture; preparedness; human rights; defence; enlargement and international. Another workshop engaged the international and inter-institutional actors: the European Parliament, European Council, Committee of Regions, Fundamental Rights Agency, United Nations, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations agency for children (UNICEF), Islamic World Educational, Scientific and



Cultural Organization (ICESCO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations University (UNU), World Economic Forum (WEF), International Labour Organization (ILO), to align with their relevant work and find synergies in ideas and actions. Finally, EU Member States were invited via the Foresight Sherpas Network, which supports the Ministers for the Future, to bring their insights and activities into the scoping<sup>2</sup>.

Throughout the participative process, various innovative approaches were used to encourage participants to think together creatively, boldly and with empathy. A guided meditation helped participants think about their connection to past and future generations, to consider the wider timeframe of taking decisions beyond here and now. A role-play exercise to empathise with different living generations helped understand better the beliefs, structures, and behaviours that may lie at the root of perceived divergences between different age groups on values, knowledge, and lived experience. Other activities included taking the role of future generations better imagine the perspective of those living in the future or eliciting personal stories of intergenerational fairness to understand citizen's experiences on this issue.

Figure 5. Examples of age group cards for a role-play exercise



<sup>2</sup>[https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/69fea923-a600-4194-824d-965f04519986\\_en?filename=ministers\\_future\\_5\\_2025\\_0.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/69fea923-a600-4194-824d-965f04519986_en?filename=ministers_future_5_2025_0.pdf)

To bring different types of policy inspirations and insights, artworks were displayed in the European Commission in the 'Good Ancestors' exhibition. The different artworks included projects, cultural practices and traditions from across the world, deeply rooted in intergenerational thinking and our shared human experience. The Good Ancestors exhibition was initially shown in the United Nations General Assembly building during the United Nations Summit of the Future in September 2024 and was organised by the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the United Nations and the Permanent Mission of Jamaica to the United Nations.

Figure 6. The Good Ancestor exhibition

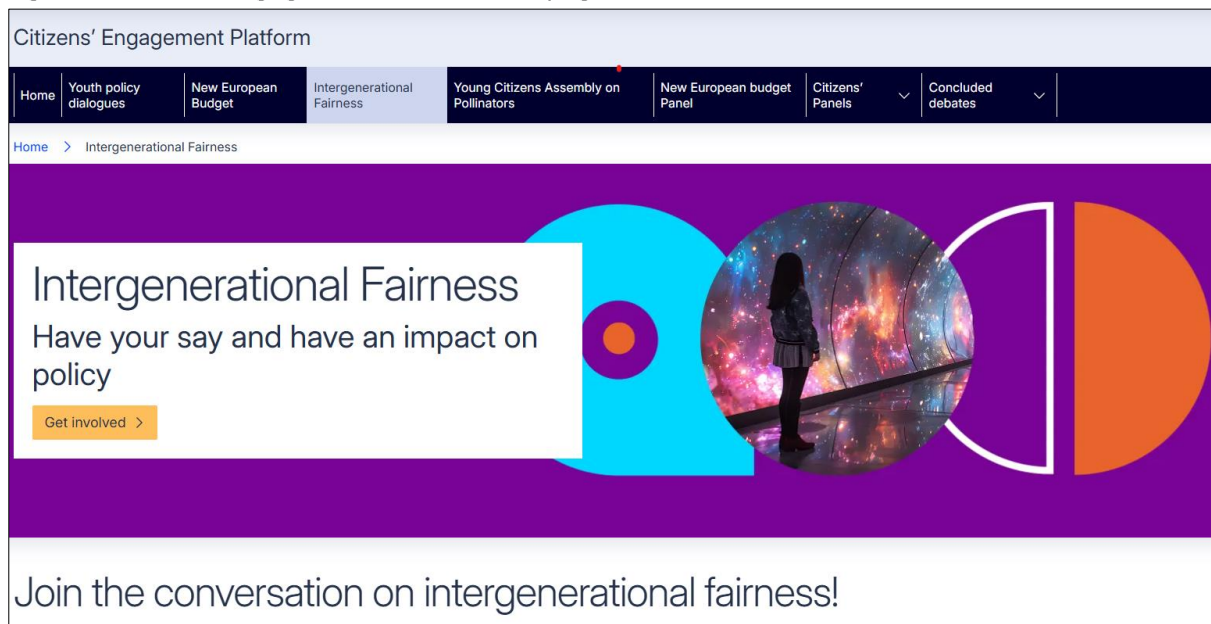


Finally, the online Citizens' Engagement Platform<sup>3</sup> of the European Commission is used to collect contributions on Intergenerational Fairness Strategy from those who have not participated in workshops. In the scoping phase, over 90 contributions were received and added to the analysis of results. This digital channel of participation, open over several months, allows for continuous engagement with a wide spectrum of citizens. This input will also contribute to the framing of European Citizens' Panel on Intergenerational Fairness which will take place in the second part of 2025.

---

<sup>3</sup> [Intergenerational Fairness - European Commission](#)

Figure 7. Citizens' Engagement Platform webpage



## Intergenerational fairness – core issues

“To leave a better future for generations to come and to fulfill our commitment to meet the demands of the present in a way that safeguards the needs and interests of future generations, while leaving no one behind” is the core of the UN Pact of the Future<sup>4</sup>, aiming to reimagine global cooperation for a fairer future for all. Addressing the most pressing challenges of today requires a societal transformation which will be brought about in a turbulent, unpredictable world. This transformation is in the hands of all current and future generations and informed by the wisdom of past generations.

Similarly, the 2023 Strategic Foresight Report of the European Commission, which examined the social and economic aspects of sustainability and related choices that the EU faces, calls for a new European social contract to enact socially, environmentally and economically sustainable Europe in 2050 with intergenerational fairness as one of its guiding principles<sup>5</sup>.

An intergenerationally fair European Union would create opportunities for collaboration and dialogue between the current generations but would also consider the future generations to create a long-term human-centred perspective in governance and decision making<sup>6</sup>.

Reflection on the intergenerational collaboration and dialogue between current generations in the EU is not new. In the context of demographic change, one of the key drivers shaping the issue of intergenerational relations, the Commission presented the 2007 Communication “Promoting solidarity between the generations,”<sup>7</sup> focused on family policies, and proposed 2012 as the “European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations”<sup>8</sup>. More recently, various initiatives targeted different age groups: the 2019–2027 EU Youth Strategy<sup>9</sup>, 2021 Green Paper on “Ageing – Fostering solidarity and responsibility between generations”<sup>10</sup> and the 2023 Communication Demographic change in Europe: a toolbox for action<sup>11</sup>.

---

<sup>4</sup> [Pact for the Future - United Nations Summit of the Future | United Nations](#)

<sup>5</sup> European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council – 2023 Strategic Foresight Report Sustainability and people's wellbeing at the heart of Europe's Open Strategic Autonomy, COM(2023)376 final, 6.7.2023

<sup>6</sup> OECD. (2020). Governance for youth, trust and intergenerational justice: Fit for all generations? (OECD Public Governance Reviews). OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/c3e5cb8a-en>.

<sup>7</sup> European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Promoting solidarity between the generations, COM(2007) 244 final, 10.5.2007

<sup>8</sup> European Commission, Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation, results and overall assessment of the 2012 European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations, COM(2014)562 final, 15.9.2014

<sup>9</sup> European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy (COM(2018) 269 final, 22.5.2018)

<sup>10</sup> European Commission, GREEN PAPER ON AGEING Fostering solidarity and responsibility between generations, COM (2021)50 final, 27.1.2021

<sup>11</sup> European Commission, C Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Demographic change in Europe: a toolbox for action, COM(2023)577 final, 11.10.2023

The EU has been empowering various generations to engage in the EU policymaking process, through the Youth Dialogue, EU Children's Participation Platform, and Citizens' Panels, to mention a few. However, going beyond issues specific to a particular generation, deliberation fora which focus on intergenerational collaboration have only started to be explored and have not yet been institutionalised<sup>12</sup>.

While increasing inequalities and polarisation may make an intergenerational dialogue difficult, addressing the complex, long-term issues related to societal challenges can benefit not only from the unique experience, knowledge and perspectives of different generations, but also from the collaboration between them. Having an intergenerational dialogue would change the perspective on generations from considering them as independent and homogenous “layers” of the population towards seeing them as intertwined lives at different stages of the life course<sup>13</sup>. And the intertwining can be extended to past generations, with their heritage, legacy and traumas, and future generations, with their needs, interests, and rights. Up to now, future generations have not been explicitly and consistently considered within the concept of intergenerational solidarity. This new approach extends the focus from the now to a broader horizon, encouraging us to act as “a good ancestor” to future generations.<sup>14</sup>

The EU has started to incorporate a wider, long-term perspective into its policies through strategic foresight. Since 2020, the Commission produces an annual Strategic Foresight Report<sup>15</sup>, which informs Commission work planning. Foresight tools are also included in the Better Regulation Toolkit. In addition, the European Strategy and Policy Analysis System (ESPAS) brings together nine EU institutions and bodies who are committed to thinking longer term about the challenges and opportunities facing Europe<sup>16</sup>. Finally, “Ministers for the Future”, designated by each Member State, meet informally at least once a year to discuss key issues of relevance to Europe’s future.<sup>17</sup>

Strategic foresight explores different possible futures; alongside the opportunities and challenges they might present. It looks at trends, the changes they bring and their consequences as they extend into the future, building chronological pathways towards the desirable common futures.

An intergenerational fairness approach, including a temporal horizon spanning past and future generations, provides a new lens to look and act beyond today’s concerns by adopting a forward-looking human perspective. The focus is less on changing trends and systems and more on continuity of the communities that will manage this change<sup>18</sup>. It offers a more community- and human-centred foresight mindset, where policymaking is less about managing a linear flow of external events and more a way of establishing and managing meaningful social relations across time. If we consider a thriving society as common good, it is our responsibility to care for past, current and future generations’ well-being<sup>19</sup>.

---

<sup>12</sup> [Bringing generations together to talk about Civic Engagement | CoP CC on Participatory and Deliberative Democracy](#)

<sup>13</sup> Ingold, T. (2024), *The Rise and Fall of Generation Now*, Polity Press

<sup>14</sup> Krznaric R. (2020), *The Good Ancestor*, Ebury Publishing

<sup>15</sup> [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/strategic-foresight\\_en#strategic-foresight-reports](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/strategic-foresight_en#strategic-foresight-reports)

<sup>16</sup> [www.espas.eu](http://www.espas.eu)

<sup>17</sup> [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/strategic-foresight\\_en#eu-wide-foresight-network](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/strategic-foresight_en#eu-wide-foresight-network)

<sup>18</sup> Michelle Bastian; Is Long-Term Thinking a Trap?: Chronowashing, Temporal Narcissism, and the Time Machines of Racism. *Environmental Humanities* 1 July 2024; 16 (2): 403–421. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1215/22011919-11150043>

<sup>19</sup> Whyte K., (2021) *Time as Kinship*, in *The Cambridge Companion to Environmental Humanities*, edited by Jeffrey Cohen (Arizona State University) and Stephanie Foote (West Virginia University): Cambridge University Press.



Figure 8: ZEITPYRAMIDE. In Wemding, Bavaria, in 1993, Manfred Laber initiated construction of a pyramid of 120 blocks, one added every decade. (Good Ancestor exhibition)



An intergenerational perspective that focuses on the fairness of changing relations in society also acknowledges that there is no single possible future to strive for. Instead of a general and anonymous “one-size-fits-all” desirable future for the whole society, the approach focuses on how current and future people and communities should give rise to multiple interrelated potential futures.

Thus, the strategy for intergenerational fairness aims to build a fairer society by empowering all generations, both current and future, to create together their desired futures, while ensuring that the realisation of each generation's aspirations is achieved without compromising one another.

Empowering all generations to create together a fairer society can contribute to the European Pillar of Social Rights, which includes, among others, the principles of equal opportunities, social protection and pensions, health care and long-term care and access to essential services. Intergenerational fairness can bring new ways of addressing poverty, exclusion and discrimination.

Rejecting the notion that young or old age automatically means belonging to a vulnerable group, an age-sensitive and intersectional approach could nevertheless help better support people in vulnerable situations. This would lead to strengthening the European Social Model for long-term sustainability - either through intergenerational initiatives, life-course approaches to understand processes throughout individual's life, and anticipating longer-term and systemic impacts of short-term, targeted interventions.

Through the workshops with diverse stakeholders, combining the main elements of discussions, we have defined three main issues where intergenerational fairness could shape the future of Europe:

1. Changes in governance and democratic participation to build institutions and legal systems which integrate an intergenerational, long-term perspective for better decision-making and prioritising the well-being of both current and future generations.

2. Addressing the complex and long-term societal challenges through the intergenerational perspective: environmental justice in the face of the triple crisis; responsible innovation; rising inequalities (including housing and cost of living); lifelong education for transition; social cohesion and resilience.
3. Empowering all generations together to help protect vulnerable populations, taking into account the intersectionality of social categories that shape the vulnerabilities. Reinforcing the European Social Model through intergenerational initiatives, life-course approaches, and anticipating longer-term and systemic impacts of short-term, targeted interventions.

The scoping process provided more detailed information around the issues and problems related to each of the three points.

Figure 9. Selected contributions from stakeholders



### Changes in governance

In terms of the policymaking process, three issues emerged from discussions: the institutionalisation of long-term thinking in public policies; enhancing participation in democratic processes; and organising resources to assure the wellbeing of current and future generations.

The institutionalisation of **long-term thinking in public policies** comes from bringing the perspective of the responsibility for the wellbeing of the future generations. The image of the impatient citizen underpins a lot of policymaking: politicians focus on delivering short-term benefits over solving long-term problems, worrying they would not be re-elected otherwise. Undifferentiated discounting of future benefits during regulatory policy analysis is common practice: sacrifices in the present to create benefits in the future are avoided. This image is being put into question by a growing body of evidence, however: rather than impatience, mistrust in the capacity of political institutions to deliver on long-term commitments seems to be the dominant driver when citizens are sceptical of future-oriented policies.<sup>20</sup> Most people do care about intergenerational fairness but do not trust the political institutions tasked with ensuring it. Intergenerational fairness is connected with improving public administration's trustworthiness and long-term governance capacity.

Potential legal bases for EU-level action to ensure intergenerational fairness exist.<sup>21</sup> To strengthen the explicit recognition of future generations' rights, adopting specific EU legislation on future generations' rights could be considered.

The long term thinking should take into account the diverse views of citizens through **participation in democratic processes** and co-creation of policies. The fundamental principle of democracy asserts that everyone impacted by decisions should be represented in the decision-making process. However, governments struggle with fair inclusion of all current generations. In addition, population aging poses significant challenges for democratic systems, particularly regarding questions of legitimacy as the generational balance shifts. Here, EU activities around the European Democracy Action Plan and enhancing participatory processes (such as European Citizens' Initiative, Citizens' Engagement Platform and Panels, EU Children's Participation Platform, Youth Policy Dialogues) can constitute a starting point for policy discussion.

The concept of intergenerational fairness, which advocates for the inclusion and representation of future generations, increasingly becomes an important political discussion. Right now, people are exploring and testing ways to involve those who are not yet born, even though we cannot predict the conditions they will live in. Some of the idea refer to the decision-making and institutional design<sup>22</sup>, others look at the electoral systems, e.g. proxy voting for future generations<sup>23</sup>.

The third element refers to the potential **objectives of long-term policymaking, allowing to prioritise and allocate resources**. The wellbeing of citizens is one of the core aims of the European Union, which goes beyond the narrow economic growth objectives and refocuses attention from parameters to people. Various conceptual frameworks going beyond the GDP measure of economic

---

<sup>20</sup> See Prior, M., Alsharawy, A., & Andrews, T. M. (2023). People are less myopic about future than past collective outcomes. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 120(52), e2310050120. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2310050120>; Jacobs, A. M., & Matthews, J. S. (2012). Why do citizens discount the future? Public opinion and the timing of policy consequences. *British Journal of Political Science*, 42\*(4), 903–935. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123412000117>; Barnfield, M. (2024). Policy discounting across and beyond the lifespan. *European Journal of Political Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12719>; Fairbrother, M., Arrhenius, G., Bykvist, K., & Campbell, T. (2021). Governing for future generations: How political trust shapes attitudes towards climate and debt policies. *Frontiers in Political Science*, 3\*, 656053. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2021.656053>

<sup>21</sup> <https://jesc.eu/protecting-the-interests-of-future-generations-by-the-european-union-an-overview-of-the-existing-powers-and-legal-bases-in-eu-law/>

<sup>22</sup> Guida, V., K. Klaser, and L. Mittone. "Building Sustainable Futures through Soft Institutional Interventions in the Climate Change Context: An Intergenerational Experiment." *Futures* 166 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2024.103531>.

<sup>23</sup> Campos, A. S. (2023). The future-oriented franchise: Instituting temporal electoral circles. *European Journal of Political Theory*, 23(4), 499–521. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14748851231165838>

growth are explored to address the multifaceted understanding of wellbeing. The Sustainable and Inclusive Wellbeing framework looks at current, but also future wellbeing, linked to the resilience of societies.

Figure 10. Future Design Councils involve asking people to wear ceremonial robes that place them in the shoes of future generations (Good Ancestor exhibition)



### Intergenerational perspective on societal challenges

The areas considered most important by stakeholders when taking into account the need for long-term thinking were the following: climate change and environment, responsible innovation, economic fairness and future skills and education.

The **triple planetary crisis** (climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution) creates the most immediate context to act to preserve future generations' right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. Going through with sustainability transitions requires decisive action today, but also thoughtful consideration of irreversibility and unintended effects of some potential actions (e.g. geoengineering). General principles, such as operating within planetary boundaries, help to guide long-term action. The Nature Restoration Law, Climate law, climate mitigation and adaptation strategies are all policy initiatives that potentially include intergenerational fairness.

While the rapid pace of technological development has facilitated remarkable economic and social progress, it also introduces new challenges that, if not addressed, threaten the very fabric of our future. Beyond the immediate and catastrophic risks, such as atomic warfare and climate disasters, key challenges arise from the long-term impact of our technological endeavours. **Responsible innovation** involves adopting a values-based approach that safeguards EU public values and the fundamental rights of citizens, as well as implementing regulations to maximise the benefits of technology for all present and future generations while effectively managing risks.

In the EU, two existing principles balance the need to foster an environment where innovation can thrive while ensuring it does not come at the expense of future generations: the precautionary principle and the innovation principle. The New European Innovation Agenda with the focus on emerging technologies, such as EU AI Act, strategy on Web 4.0 and virtual worlds or the planned EU Innovation Act, Biotech Act or Space Act are examples of EU activity in the area.

The 2008 financial crisis and then the COVID pandemic, as well as long-term global driving forces such as ageing population and climate change, have raised questions about **economic fairness**: the sustainability of public financing, social mobility, and equitable access to essential services (e.g., healthcare, pensions, education, social security) for young generations and generations to come. Therefore, addressing youth unemployment, flexible retirement patterns, and affordable intergenerational housing aligns with the common concerns in EU member states regarding the sustainability of welfare states and declining living standards among young people. The European Semester, New European Bauhaus, Social Economy and Circular Economy Action Plans are all policy initiatives inherently connected to issues of intergenerational fairness.

**Education and skills** are areas which also require long-term thinking, as they help adapt to changing realities. Within the current EU initiatives, the Union of Skills aims at the development of quality, inclusive and adaptable education, training and skills systems that respond to future needs. For example, the LifeComp framework looks at “Personal, Social and Learning to Learn” set of competences applying to all spheres of life that can help citizens thrive in the 21st Century<sup>24</sup>. It includes self-regulation, flexibility, wellbeing, empathy, communication, collaboration, growth mindset, critical thinking and managing learning. Specific competences also relate to sustainability, digital skills or entrepreneurship.

### **Intergenerational collaboration to address vulnerable populations**

In the discussions on the scope of intergenerational fairness, participants also raised several topics such as preparedness and security, health and care, social cohesion, digital inclusion and access to services, where intergenerational collaboration and care for the future can bring a different approach: intergenerational initiatives, life-course approaches, and anticipating longer-term and systemic impacts of short-term, targeted interventions.

With increased geopolitical and climate-related risks, **preparedness and security** is one of the priorities for action. Intergenerational approaches can help mitigate risks for the most vulnerable groups but considering future generations also favours investments in long-term prevention and resilience of vital societal functions. The Preparedness Union makes the first step in taking a whole-

---

<sup>24</sup> [LifeComp - European Commission](#)



of-society approach, which fosters an inclusive culture of preparedness and resilience involving citizens, local communities and civil society, businesses and social partners.

The urgent need to address the complex interplay between generations in **health and social care** is evident. Increasing longevity and rising costs of ever more complex medical procedures risk deepening inequalities in affordable living conditions both between and within generations. Future health and care risks are also naturally interlinked with other key topics of intergenerational fairness, notably pension systems and degradation of the environment. Fostering intergenerational fairness requires trust in the capacity of health institutions to sustain long-term commitments and ensure equitable access to care for all generations. Adopting a foresight approach in health policy can help anticipate future challenges, such as demographic changes and emerging health threats, ensuring that today's decisions do not compromise tomorrow's health outcomes.

Social systems foster bonds and relationships between people of different age groups to **reduce social exclusion and create a more resilient society**. While solidarity is the fundamental value that guides and motivates the EU collective action, cohesion provides the social fabric that allows it to emerge and thrive. In strengthening cohesion and fairness, the strategy will also help create a more resilient society, better equipped to withstand the shocks and disruptions of our complex and interconnected world. By incorporating a long-term perspective, the strategy can, for instance, support work on intergenerational renewal in agriculture, intergenerational mobility or combatting age discrimination.

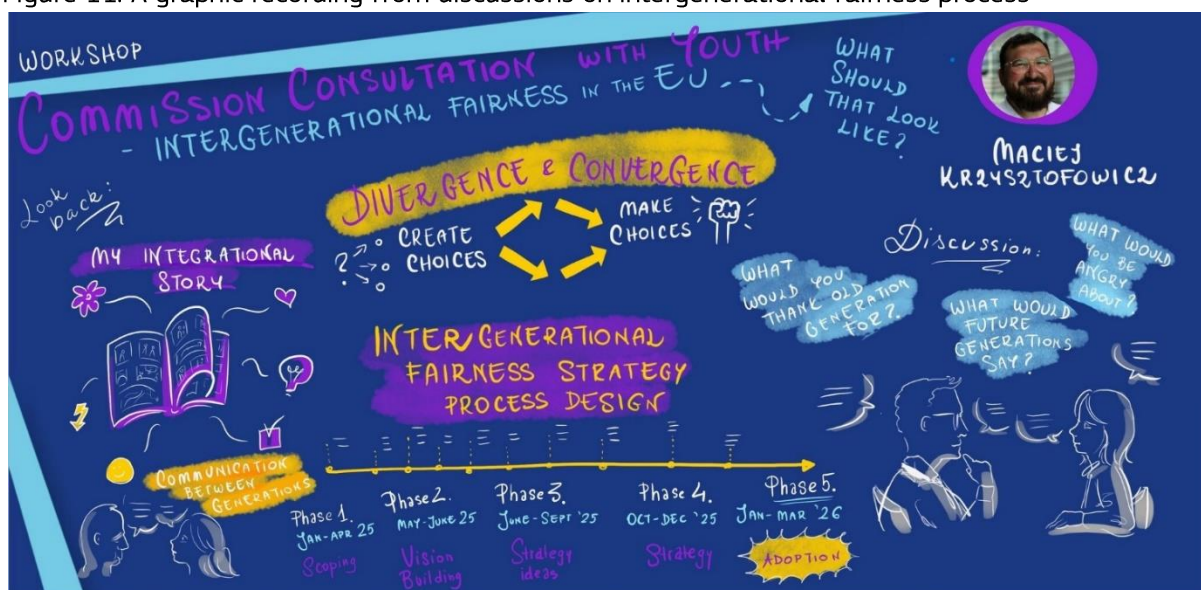
The European Pillar of Social Rights also sets **access to essential services** as one of its principles. Barriers to access can be linked to quality (whether standard correspond to needs of users), accessibility (can it be obtained easily), availability (convenient and close location) and affordability (ability to pay without financial hardship). Community-based approaches that encourage social innovation, including those that link different generations, can help address the needs of most vulnerable groups for mobility (community transport), energy (energy communities) but also financial services (community banking). Territorial dimension including urban policies and age-friendly cities, the urban-rural divide and the related demographic trends will also affect place-based approaches to services. An important element that will determine access to services for future generations relate to how we take care and develop infrastructure – decisions taken today will shape the sanitation, energy, mobility services long into the future, either creating path-dependencies or new opportunities.

## Process ideas

As part of the scoping process, participants could also express their expectations and opinions on the four-stage participative process of co-creating the strategy. The main messages regarding the process were the following:

- Continuously use **inclusive and participative processes** to engage meaningfully with a broad variety of stakeholders, paying special attention to the less heard: youth, children, marginalised groups, future generations.
- Make the **strategy for people and not abstract generations** so that human-centric approach guides the potential actions and the great diversity of individual experiences is acknowledged. Many voices also advocated going **beyond human-centricity to “eco-centric”** approach expanding the concept to all living beings and ecosystems.
- Make it concrete and build on **cases of what is already happening** in Europe and elsewhere, mapping and learning from good and bad examples related to intergenerational fairness.
- Initiate and **coordinate discussions and actions** across different layers of multi-level governance (EU, Member States, Regions) and all EU institutions in order to involve all relevant actors in conception and implementation of the strategy. As it is a cross-cutting topic, bring different policy areas together.
- Be mindful about **selecting impactful actions** to prioritise efficiently, focus efforts in most promising areas and integrate intergenerational fairness into policymaking. Avoid a dispersed agenda of unrelated issues.
- **Secure financial resources** to deliver on the actions and make change happen.
- Create a robust framework for **monitoring and evaluation** of impact, including collection of relevant data and adaptive mechanisms to adjust the strategy to new realities. Leverage **long-term thinking** also in the preparation of the strategy.
- Remember the **global dimension**, connecting to United Nations initiatives and taking into account the communities and issues that are beyond the EU borders.

Figure 11. A graphic recording from discussions on intergenerational fairness process



## Vision elements

In the numerous consultations and workshops, the participants have also been asked about the aspirations and hopes surrounding intergenerational fairness. Based on their answers, the following preliminary elements of a vision for an intergenerationally fair EU can be assembled:

*Intergenerationally fair EU is one where current and next generations can trust in the future and in human collaboration. Where each generation builds on the previous ones to become conscious citizens and custodians of the Earth. Long-term view is favoured over short term, human rights of all are respected and people are valued more than profit. All generations participate in decision making that also take into account the opportunities of future generations. Fresh ideas, diverse perspectives and courage reinvigorate the people and institutions, which leads to a thriving, more intelligent, fair and balanced society.*

*Intergenerationally fair EU will contribute to more resilient, diverse society which will cultivate shared hope for the future and co-ownership of the future to be the custodian and guardian of the next generations. This will help address the most pressing challenges of our society together: peace, triple planetary crisis, and material and psychological wellbeing.*

*Intergenerationally fair EU will be guided by values and principles of inclusiveness, equality and justice, empathy and respect between generations, long-term thinking, creativity, collaboration, agency and responsibility of one's actions.*

*Creating intergenerationally fair EU will require creating opportunities for intergenerational dialogue and exchange; tackling the issue of distributional justice; introducing innovative long-term and life-course approaches to policy-making and institutionalising them; bringing genuine participation of all current generations and the future ones in the policy process; creating metrics and frameworks for understanding the wellbeing of societies; mediating between individual and collective interests; and bringing the past and the heritage to enrich the long-term perspective.*

## Lessons learned and next steps

The experience of working with an innovative process in strategy creation offers many lessons, which were considered together with the input on the process provided by stakeholders. Below are some of the reflections, which will guide the successive steps of the process:

- Creating a meaningful intergenerational dialogue at EU level requires new approaches and procedures that depart from the current situation where different age-groups are consulted separately. In cooperations with various stakeholder organisations, we will attempt such a dialogue in the visioning part of the process.
- Engaging citizens throughout the process, rather than at a single point, requires a constant adaptation to the type of contributions that are asked for and ways of engaging, so that it becomes a continuous dialogue. The types of workshops and questions in the citizen engagement platform will evolve with the next stages of visioning and strategy ideas.
- A cross-cutting approach which combines many different policy areas requires the coordination of multiple actors and many different sources of knowledge, which adds substantial complexity to the process but results in new ideas and synergies. Rather than narrowly defined and “siloed,” intergenerational fairness can be seen as a new lens to look at current policy issues.
- The hopes and aspirations of participants were collected to create some broad elements of a vision of what an intergenerationally fair EU could be. However, a human-centred approach acknowledges that within this vision there are many concrete potentialities for the general principles to come alive in a particular context and for community. The next step would require creating snapshots of those new realities.
- In the scoping discussions, participants noted that there are no short-term and long-term issues, because all have consequences for future generations, but perceived short-term quick fixes outweigh potential long-term concerns or opportunities.



The scoping stage provided a wide and coherent framing for intergenerational fairness in the EU, considering diverse positions, experiences and interests. The framing created in the scoping stage and the sense of direction inspired by the visioning stage will contribute to the formulation of strategy ideas. By taking the perspective of future generations and with the collaborative mindset of intergenerational action, intergenerational fairness becomes a guiding principle for the EU policies so that they are fair, sustainable and fit for the future. This framing creates a good starting point for the next stage of envisioning the hopes and aspirations related to intergenerational fairness.

Figure 12: Collective Time Capsule (Good Ancestor exhibition)

## What do you want to leave behind?

*The post box and postcards next to this poster invite all visitors to write to future generations. Please write legibly what you would like to last or what you want to leave behind for future generations.*

DATE \_\_\_\_\_ NAME \_\_\_\_\_



### Collective Time Capsule

Location: Created by attendees of the UN Summit of the Future  
Established: September 2024  
Artist: Angelina Kumar  
Archiving Location: Deep in a saltmine in Hallstatt/Austria  
Memory of Mankind established in 2012  
Artist: Martin Kunze

Helpful replies shall become part of the Memory of Mankind Project. Text on the postcards will be archived on ceramic tablets and stored deep in the oldest salt mine to be found and read hundreds of thousand years into the future.

They will also be placed on a website to encourage wider reflection and to make it more likely that there will be a long future.

In a long future there should be someone who is aware.  
Someone who can understand what you wrote and can answer these questions for their future generations.



## Annex: Scope of Intergenerational Fairness

Root Causes	Dimensions		
<p><b>LONG TERM THINKING:</b> The society's decisions favour short term thinking: focusing on past problems and current contingencies. When we imagine the future, we imagine it for ourselves, but not those who will come after us.</p> <p><b>COLLABORATION BETWEEN GENERATIONS:</b> Changing demographic patters and increasing democratic participation means that there is a broader age-range of people participating in the economic and political system. While polarisation and inequalities are creating tensions, at the same time a growing societal challenges require long-term solutions (climate change and environmental degradation, peace).</p> <p><b>INTERSECTIONALITY OF VULNERABILITIES:</b> Increasing risks (geopolitical, economic, environmental) are making the most vulnerable groups (elderly, youth) even more exposed to crises as they intersect with other vulnerabilities (health, social connection, dependence, poverty).</p>	<b>LONG TERM GOVERNANCE</b> - how can the reflection on future generations be reflected in the decision-making/policymaking processes? What is the role of EU?		
	<b>FUTURE WELLBEING/INVESTMENT</b> - how can investment and funding be oriented towards future needs and long-term goals? What is the role of EU?		
	<b>RESPONSIBLE INNOVATION/ TECHNOLOGY</b> - how can innovation systems be beneficial to the society in the long term? What is the role of EU?		
	<b>DEMOCRACY AND REPRESENTATION</b> - how can the current governance systems represent the needs of all current and future generations institutionalised in the governance systems? What is the role of EU?		
	<b>ENVIRONMENT and CLIMATE CHANGE</b> - how can the challenge of the triple crisis (climate change, biodiversity, pollution) be addressed through the society for current and future generations? What is the role of EU?		
	<b>COST OF LIVING/HOUSING</b> - how can intergenerational solidarity address the current problems of economic inequalities, poverty and economic opportunities? What is the role of EU?		
	<b>SKILLS AND EDUCATION</b> - how can intergenerational teaching and learning help upskilling, reskilling, and improve educational outcomes in diverse settings (formal, informal, multicultural etc)? What is the role of EU?		
	<b>SOCIAL COHESION/ RESILIENCE</b> - how can social systems foster bonds and relationships between people of different age groups to reduce social exclusion and create a more resilient society? What is the role of EU?		
	<b>PREPAREDNESS, PEACE and SECURITY</b> - growing number and severity of interconnected risks will increase the vulnerability of those who are already most affected - how can intergenerational lens address this? What is the role of EU?		
	<b>HEALTH / CARE</b> - care and health aspects are particularly important for the young and elderly and different model of support have emerged - how can the intergenerational lens help come up with renewed attention to care and health? What is the role of EU?		
	<b>DIGITAL INCLUSION</b> - new and emerging technologies will increasingly create barriers to access across the generations - how can they be addressed in intergenerational way? What is the role of EU?		
	<b>ACCESS TO SERVICES</b> - there are many facets of exclusion from basic services - transport, energy - how can intergenerational approach help? What is the role of EU?		
Tools & Methods			
Definition / Framework / Lens	Impact Assessment / Better Regulation		Indicator / Index /Compass ideas