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PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

Strategy on Intergenerational Fairness

{SWD(2026) 80 final}

1. Introduction

The strategy on intergenerational fairness expresses the European Commission's ambition to ensure that today's choices contribute positively also to tomorrow's opportunities, and that both benefits and responsibilities are shared fairly across age groups. It aims at promoting policy approaches that combine economic prosperity and wellbeing, environmental responsibility, social and territorial cohesion, fiscal sustainability and democratic participation. It further aims to amplify young people's voices as the EU's future and ensuring solidarity between generations.

The EU has achieved one of the most advanced levels of equality of opportunity globally, supported by a competitive market economy, strong social models and quality and inclusive public services. In a world marked by growing instability and accelerating global change, where long-term demographic, technological, economic, social, climate and environmental trends are reshaping how opportunities are created and shared, renewed attention to intergenerational fairness is essential. This will help ensure that opportunities for young people - who are the foundation of the Europe to come - continue to expand and that the EU can deliver sustainable and inclusive well-being to its people.

The strategy is a project of trust and cooperation, built through a co-design process¹ which included a dedicated European Citizens' Panel on Intergenerational Fairness.² It reflects the ideas and recommendations of citizens, stakeholders, and communities across Europe. People of all ages, diverse backgrounds and regions collaborated in exploring how to equip the EU to better navigate growing and interconnected challenges in pursuit of a better future.

At the 2024 UN Summit of the Future, the EU and its Member States endorsed the Pact for the Future and the Declaration on Future Generations.³ More than a third of EU Member States mention future generations in their Constitutions and/or have established dedicated institutional frameworks underscoring the importance of safeguarding the opportunities for future generations. This is strongly linked with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, which represent the globally shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future.

With this strategy the Commission contributes to the EU's strong commitment to build on this global momentum, guided by the understanding that safeguarding peace, human rights and the planet, while enhancing the well-being of future generations as well as advancing solidarity between current generations are part of Europe's identity, values and long-term strategic interests.⁴

Grounded in long-term responsibility, intergenerational solidarity and territorial equity, the strategy seeks to contribute also to restoring trust in public institutions, shaping a sustainable and equitable future, and ensuring that today's progress strengthens the foundations for tomorrow.

¹ [Supporting materials for the design of the Strategy](#)

² [European Citizens panel on Intergenerational Fairness](#)

³ [Declaration on Future Generations - UN](#)

⁴ The Treaty on European Union provides in Article 3(3) that the Union shall promote solidarity between generations, and the Charter of Fundamental Rights stresses that the enjoyment of fundamental rights entails responsibility with regard to future generations. Among other initiatives, key examples such as the 2012 European Year for Active Ageing and the 2022 European Year of Youth highlight the Union's focus on intergenerational cohesion. The 2023 Communication on Demographic Change places fairness between generations at the heart of policy, and the 2025 Strategic Foresight Report names it as one of eight key priorities.

2. The changing horizon of opportunities

Megatrends impacting the intergenerational balance:

Young Europeans are coming of age in a time of rapid transformation, while facing fundamental challenges. Demographic change and migration, the green and digital transitions, and a shifting geopolitical environment are redefining how opportunities, including in the areas of education, employment and housing, are created and shared across generations.⁵ These changes affect people at all stages of life and create a shared horizon of responsibility offering a powerful opportunity to renew the EU's social, economic, and democratic model in ways that benefit both present and future generations.⁶

From an intergenerational perspective, the core issue is not the change itself, but whether the choices we make today improve people's chances to do well in life and increase or limit opportunities for future generations. Longer lives, technological progress, and the transition to a climate-neutral and sustainable resource use economy can strengthen prosperity and well-being across the life course. Achieving this will require a long-term vision enshrined in law, upstream investment, support for active participation throughout working lives, and sustained fairness between generations.

The demographic transition is reshaping societies with implications for younger generations' access to housing, work and income, as well as for long-term care and healthcare. At the same time, active ageing, intergenerational knowledge transfer and extended economic and social participation, can support longer and healthier lives. With investment in lifelong learning, flexible work and age-friendly communities, demographic change can become an opportunity for all generations.

Climate and nature are another clear example. Acting decisively on climate and environmental protection avoids far greater costs for younger and future generations and is an investment in the health, security, and living conditions of younger and future generations, while at the same time delivering tangible benefits for people of all ages today through cleaner environments, improved public health, energy and water security and more resilient communities. By contrast, the absence of action would significantly impact the prosperity of future generations. Managed inclusively, the green transition contributes to quality jobs, improved living conditions, affordability and reinforce the EU's resilience and energy security.

Digitalisation, artificial intelligence and space-based technology are reshaping education, work, lifestyles, and democratic participation across the life course. While these transitions require adaptation, they also widen opportunities. Lifelong learning, up- and reskilling, and human-centered innovation can ensure that technological progress benefits all generations and empowers young people to thrive in a changing labour market and supports participation and autonomy throughout longer lives. The **changing nature of work** is reshaping employment, career models and organizational structures, potentially exacerbating inequalities if not managed properly, confronting the young with less linear, more uncertain careers.

Across these shifts, choices made today on investment, public finances, fiscal systems, pension systems and regulation, affecting housing, education, health, child and long-term care, work and wealth distribution, will determine whether future generations inherit growing constraints or greater capacity to act.⁷

⁵ The European Commission has identified and monitors 14 megatrends, key for the EU's future through its [Megatrends Hub](#).

⁶ The [2025 ESPAS Foresight Paper on Intergenerational Fairness](#) offers a clear overview of the challenges and opportunities of megatrends concerning Intergenerational Fairness.

⁷ The [2025 Strategic Foresight](#) Report presents eight key areas where the EU can act to transform Europe specific challenges into opportunities.

An intergenerational approach therefore calls for determination rooted in shared responsibility and solidarity so that all generations, first and foremost young people, are not merely prepared for the future but equipped to shape it, supported by the experience, contribution and solidarity of all generations.

Opportunities and risks shift as people move through different stages of life, and as a result, important gaps are emerging between generations in access to education, a safe environment, stable work, housing, care, wealth and long-term security. This calls for a unifying approach that brings generations together around shared goals for the future.

Children and young people today have access to increasing opportunities to learn, travel, volunteer and have their voice heard.⁸ They are the most educated and digitally-savvy generation ever, positioned at the forefront of technological innovation⁹ and with a life expectancy estimated at 81.7 years in 2024. However, young people today are also more exposed to labour-market disruptions and new forms of insecurity linked to rapid technological change and the expansion of non-standard forms of work. Despite their overall high level of education, many follow education paths which do not always align with evolving skills needs and emerging sectors. Many are exposed to a sharp decline in basic skills. This can complicate transitions from education to stable employment, contributing to fragmented early career trajectories and heightened risk of job instability. These economic pressures intersect with broader social and psychological challenges, including elevated levels of stress, anxiety and loneliness among young people, reflecting uncertainty, financial strain and the intensification of social comparison in digital environments. Housing affordability is also a challenge, making it more difficult for young people to become homeowners and to leave their parents' home, delaying their move to autonomy.

Older people, too, are facing a transformed horizon of opportunities shaped by longer, healthier lives, but also more long-term care needs and poverty risks in later life. Their ability to stay active, secure, and connected varies sharply. Particularly for women, inequalities accumulated over the life course translate into higher risk of poverty and financial insecurity. Many older people wish to continue contributing to society and the labour market but are impeded by rapid digitalisation,¹⁰ which risk excluding those with lower digital skills.¹¹ Ageism is widespread: 52% of EU citizens see age as the biggest disadvantage for job candidates, with older workers often perceived as less adaptable and less digitally competent.¹² Lack of basic services and infrastructures, including broadband, impact especially some rural territories with higher average age.

Economic security in later life also depends on the adequacy and sustainability of pension systems, which play a central role in shaping intergenerational fairness by balancing income security for older people with the long-term resilience of public finances. The territorial gaps in healthcare, long-term care, access to facilities for regular physical activities and mobility, further affect independence, the feeling of loneliness, health outcomes and quality of life in old age.¹³ Future older individuals will live longer, requiring home-based services and adjustments to keep living in their homes. Regardless of age, physical activity contributes to enhancing overall wellbeing and cognitive functions.

⁸ [Report on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy \(2022-2024\)](#) - Publications Office of the EU

⁹ According to [Eurostat](#), at least 75% of young people aged between 16 and 29 were equipped with at least basic digital skills in 2025.

¹⁰ [Skills for the digital age - Statistics Explained - Eurostat](#)

¹¹ [Digital skills in 2023: impact of education and age](#)

¹² [Discrimination in the European Union - December 2023 - Eurobarometer survey](#)

¹³ [Disability statistics – elderly needs for help or assistance](#)

Gender remains a major factor in inequality of opportunity and discrimination. In 2023, in the EU, women earned on average 12% less per hour than men, and in 2024 their employment rate was 70.8% compared to 80.8% for men.¹⁴ Women also carry the primary burden of care responsibilities. Many face discrimination and sexual harassment, with about one in three experiencing physical or sexual violence, including at work. Over time, these inequalities in employment, pay and care responsibilities accumulate, widening gender gaps in income security, pensions and economic independence in later life.

Disadvantaged groups experience additional difficulties requiring an intersectional approach. On average, more than a quarter of market income inequality in Europe can be traced to inherited factors such as parents' socio-economic status¹⁵ or geographic location. Young people with disabilities often struggle when moving into adulthood due to weak pathways between education and employment. Children remain at a higher risk of poverty than the overall population. Territorial divides, notably for rural and remote areas, limit access to quality training, housing, transport, and connectivity, reinforcing brain drain and increasing the rate of young individuals not in education, employment or training (NEET).

Structural barriers in education and training, employment, poverty, high housing costs, and access to services accumulate and are often passed from one generation to the next, and are particularly felt by people facing discrimination, including those with migrant background, Roma and LGBTIQ+ people.

A life-course perspective extends beyond today's generations. By examining long-term demographic, technological, environmental, climate and socio-economic trends, we can anticipate the opportunities and risks **future generations** will face. Although they currently cannot vote or speak for themselves, today's choices will shape their horizon of opportunity. Intergenerational fairness therefore requires addressing current gaps while creating a future in which those not yet born can thrive.

3. What if we do not act: the cost of non-action

Intergenerational fairness is a strategic choice for the EU. Election cycles often have short timeframes, which increase incentives to favour a short-term outlook. When policies do not sufficiently take account of their impacts across generations, economic, environmental, social and democratic costs accumulate gradually. For climate change alone, inaction would cost the EU a reduction of 7% to double-digit percentages of its GDP by the end of the century.¹⁶ Climate-related economic losses are even further accelerating.¹⁷

Where opportunities are unevenly distributed across generations, territories and social groups, economic gains risk becoming increasingly concentrated. Social mobility may weaken, inequality widen, and trust in the fairness of life opportunities erode. Less than half of Europeans consider that they have equal opportunities to advance in life, and only 38 % perceive that most outcomes in their lives occur fairly, highlighting an increasing perception

¹⁴ [The gender pay gap situation in the EU - European Commission](#); [Employment gaps for women & people with disabilities - Eurostat](#)

¹⁵ OECD (2025), *To Have and Have Not – How to Bridge the Gap in Opportunities*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/dec143ad>

¹⁶ [Impact assessment for the 2040 climate target, SWD\(2024\) 63 final, Part 2/5, Annex 7, Section 3](#)

¹⁷ [Economic losses from weather- and climate-related extremes in Europe | Indicators | European Environment Agency \(EEA\)](#). Out of the EUR 822 billion climate-related economic losses that occurred in the last 45 years, 25% happened in the last 4 years only

that life is not fair.¹⁸ This perception highlights the importance of addressing emerging disparities, leading to the transmission of economic disadvantages from one generation to another, before they become structural.

Inaction can also affect democratic resilience. When policies are perceived as insufficiently responsive to generational change, confidence in institutions can decline. While trust in the EU remains comparatively high, it is essential that we build on this confidence to strengthen citizen engagement and democratic resilience. Social isolation can correlate with lower civic participation, lower voter turnout and overall reduced political engagement.¹⁹ Disinformation can erode trust in institutions and media, put elections at risk, and hamper citizens' ability to make informed decisions.²⁰ This makes societies become more exposed to shocks, more reliant on reactive responses, and less able to invest confidently in the future.

The cost of non-action on intergenerational fairness is therefore not only economic; it is also democratic, social and environmental. Addressing today's pressures on housing, skills, access to the labour market, public finances, natural resources, climate, care and welfare systems and access to services offers a meaningful opportunity to empower younger generations, while reaffirming solidarity and fairness across all ages. Intergenerational fairness is thus not an additional objective, but a condition for stability, legitimacy as well as sustainable and clean growth for the decades ahead.

4. Building new foundations for fairness: a new Intergenerational 'Contract'

Intergenerational fairness depends on consolidating the foundations on which solidarity between generations rests. This strategy presents a new intergenerational 'contract', built in response to the European Citizens' panel recommendations, reflecting the need to expand opportunities over time, address disparities across territories and ensure that decisions are taken with a longer-term perspective. **It provides a common framework for aligning foresight, fairness and responsibility**, so that today's choices strengthen opportunities for both current and future generations **and for strengthening the EU's social fabric** by bringing generations together around common goals, shared responsibility and a collective investment in the future.

The new Intergenerational 'contract' builds on three dimensions: 1) *Fair policymaking*, that embeds long-term thinking and the youth perspective; 2) *Fair opportunities* uniting generations around shared goals for a better future and 3) *Fair places* that foster intergenerational fairness across territories.

4.1. Fair Policymaking - embedding long-term thinking and the youth perspective

***Fair policymaking* requires that the long-term impacts of decisions are systematically considered alongside short-term objectives.** Laws, budgets and reforms shape opportunities over time, and choices made today can create lasting benefits - or costs - for future generations.

¹⁸ Fairness, Inequality and Inter-Generational Mobility - February 2023 - - Eurobarometer survey

¹⁹ Loneliness risk factors and consequences - The Joint Research Centre: EU Science Hub

²⁰ EU Code of Practice on Disinformation | European Commission. 63% of younger Europeans come across fake news more than once a week while 51% of Europeans think they have been exposed to disinformation online

Taking a longer-term and systemic perspective helps ensure that short-term solutions do not generate avoidable risks or burdens down the line.

This implies anticipatory and evidence-based governance approaches. Through its Better Regulation agenda, the EU is a front-runner when it comes to good governance and anticipatory decision-making.²¹ It uses several tools such as strategic foresight, impact assessments and public consultations to make evidence-based consideration of trade-offs that help identify risks early and inform policy choices. These approaches support more resilient and sound policies across sectors.

Fair policymaking also depends on ensuring that the perspectives of those most affected by decisions with long-term impact have a seat at the discussion table. This means creating meaningful and proportionate opportunities for young people to contribute to policy discussions that shape their future.

Today's decisions often imply significant impacts on future generations, be it from an economic, social or environmental perspective. The actions below will further ensure that long-term considerations are coherently integrated into the design of policies.

To support fair policymaking, the Commission will:

1. **Support building futures literacy in public administrations** across EU Member States by publishing a multilingual Future Oriented Policymaking package.
2. **Reinforce the use of strategic foresight in policymaking**, for instance by supporting the *Futures Balance Tool*, an AI-enabled tool for forward-looking policy analysis in development in partnership with the UN Beyond Lab.
3. **Continue the systematic application of the Youth Check, including Youth Policy Dialogues**, to the key initiatives of the Commission work programme to examine the potential impact of new policies on young people.
4. **Task the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies (EGE)** with providing analysis and recommendations on Fair Digital Futures, AI and Digital Public Goods.
5. **Publish an intergenerational fairness strategy progress report** in early 2028 to inform EU contributions to UN follow-up to the Declaration on Future Generations.
6. **Publish a Longevity Roadmap**, meant to map age-specific policy issues for all age groups to identify strategic opportunities for actively shaping longer, healthier and financially secure lives.

Inspiring practices across EU Member States

- **Examples of institutionalisation of long-term thinking** can be found in many EU Member States through different forms: In Finland (*Committee for the Future*²²), Spain (*National Office of Foresight and Strategy*²³), and in Malta (*Guardian of Future Generations*²⁴).
- **Many EU Member States have specific Regulatory Impact Assessments on youth** and/or future generations: Austria (*Wirkungsorientierte Folgenabschätzung*), Belgium/Flanders (*JoKER*), Finland (*Lapsivaikutusten arviointi*), France (*Clause d'impact jeunesse*), Germany (*Jugend-Check*), Italy

²¹ OECD (2025), *Better Regulation Practices across the European Union 2025*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/6f007516>

²² The Finnish "*Committee for the Future*" is a permanent parliamentary body that institutionalises foresight into governance.

²³ The Spanish "*National Office of Foresight and Strategy*" coordinates the "Spain 2050" roadmap, institutionalizing strategic foresight within governance to align current policies with long-term intergenerational equity targets.

²⁴ The Maltese "*Guardian of Future Generations*" is a high-level commission that audits government sectors to ensure sustainable development policies do not compromise future citizens.

4.2. Fair Opportunities – uniting generations around shared goals for a better future

Fair opportunities require that children and young people can build their lives on solid foundations. Early life conditions strongly shape later outcomes, while disadvantages that are not addressed early tend to accumulate over time. An intergenerational approach therefore places priority on early prevention, targeted support and well-managed transitions into adulthood and it recognises that fair opportunities are built across the life course.

Policies that focus on children and young people, notably those with a disadvantaged background and/or facing discrimination, are essential to ensuring fairness between generations. This includes sustained investment in early childhood development, education, training and skills, cultural access, participation and infrastructure, recreational activities, access to health, access to housing, transport and other essential services, as well as targeted support at key transition points in life such as leaving school, entering the labour market, or forming an independent household. It also includes promoting financial literacy, which is essential to empower young people to secure their financial independence and financial inclusion.²⁵ By addressing risks early and supporting children in need,²⁶ these measures help prevent inequalities from becoming entrenched and reduce pressure on social systems over the long term. In order to be effective, these measures need to go beyond the focus on age and take into account the specific needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

Intergenerational fairness can only exist when there is a fair distribution of the wealth created by society. Inequalities in wealth distribution, and differences in wealth and inheritance taxation in our societies shape how risks and opportunities are transmitted across generations. Removing structural barriers that disproportionately affect younger cohorts is also critical to break intergenerational transmission of disadvantages, while at the same time ensuring that older people can remain secure, included and able to contribute as they age. Housing affordability, access to education and training, stable and rewarding employment paths, high quality healthcare – including mental health care – and the ability to combine work, learning, private and family life shape whether young people can contribute fully to society and plan confidently for the future. To a large extent, they also enable intergenerational neighbourhoods, engagement and dialogue.

Translating these principles into practice requires targeted, evidence-based actions. In this context, the strategy focuses on strengthening the analytical base for intergenerational fairness through the compilation of a dedicated *Intergenerational Fairness Index*. It will be designed to capture inequalities in opportunities across current generations and over time by monitoring metrics that are closely associated with intergenerational fairness. The strategy will also boost citizens engagement by unifying generations around shared goals, strengthening intergenerational dialogue and cooperation, amplifying the voices of children and young people and combating age discrimination by sharing best practices across Member States.

²⁵ Actions to promote financial literacy have been spelled out in European Commission (2025), [Communication on a Financial Literacy Strategy for the EU](#), COM(2025) 681 final.

²⁶ Along the principles of the European Child Guarantee, [European Child Guarantee - Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion](#).

To support *fair opportunities*, the Commission will:

1. **Compile an Intergenerational Fairness Index** to identify opportunities and gaps, inform policy decisions and promote fairness across generations.
2. **Support the development of a compendium of best practices on age equality** by the High-Level Group on Non-Discrimination, Equality and Diversity building on the forthcoming study on discrimination on the grounds of age in the EU which provides an overview of national action plans or measures on age equality.
3. **Encourage collaborative research activities** promoting intergenerational fairness under Horizon Europe.
4. **Organise a Demography Forum** as a place for exchange and mutual learning on addressing demographic developments.
5. **Boost citizens engagement – particularly of young people** – by supporting participatory and consultative processes including through:
 - a. Promoting Intergenerational dialogues, participatory budgeting, participatory foresight, citizens' panels and innovative online civic tech tools.
 - b. Organising the 2026 European Youth Week dedicated to solidarity and fairness.
 - c. Raising awareness particularly around November 16 as a day marking Intergenerational Fairness.
6. **Strengthen the intergenerational fairness dimension in EU youth and sport policies** through the post **2027 EU Youth Strategy** and **EU Work Plan for Sport**, as well as **strengthen child participation** in EU policy making, by upholding children's rights in all relevant EU policies²⁷ and building on the EU Children's Participation Platform.²⁸

Inspiring practices across EU Member States

- **In the Netherlands, the Promising Start action programme** supports children and their parents in the first 1000 days.
- **In Belgium, CALICO is an EU-funded housing project** in Brussels supporting intergenerational solidarity, women's housing, and affordable ownership.
- **In Poland, the Together with Seniors - Gardening Workshops** promote intergenerational bonds and community integration as part of a European Solidarity Corps project.

4.3. Fair Places - ensuring intergenerational fairness across territories

Intergenerational fairness is shaped not only by age, gender and socio-economic background, but also by location. Where people live influences strongly their access to education, culture, jobs, housing, services, digital infrastructure, mobility, and opportunities for democratic and societal participation. Territorial disparities - between urban and rural areas, cross-border regions and disadvantaged neighbourhoods - can amplify inequalities over time.

A territorial perspective on intergenerational fairness focuses on ensuring that different generations are not disadvantaged by geography. This requires policies that take account of local conditions and climate impact and invest in the long-term capacity of places to support opportunity across generations. Access to affordable and sustainable housing, quality public services, including social and care services, transport, digital connectivity, social infrastructure

²⁷ [EU strategy on the rights of the child](#), COM(2021) 142 final.

²⁸ [EU Children's Participation Platform](#) | [European Union](#).

and recreation facilities are central to whether people can remain, return, or build their futures in their communities. At the same time, educational mobility and free movement of workers improve opportunities, notably for young people, allowing the transfer of skills, knowledge, and supporting long-term sustainable competitiveness and growth.

Strengthening intergenerational connections at local level also contributes to resilience and social cohesion. Community facilities, shared public spaces, and local services can support interaction across age groups, reduce isolation, and foster mutual support—particularly in areas facing demographic change or economic transition. Enhancing people’s access to and participation in culture fosters shared values and social cohesion, empowering all generations.

Ensuring fair places is about targeted, place-based actions - conducted in conjunction with local and regional authorities - that strengthen opportunities for younger generations, support healthy and active ageing within local communities, foster the exchange of experiences across territories and promote initiatives that reinforce intergenerational connections within communities.

To support *fair places*, the Commission will:

1. **Launch the *Voices of the Future initiative*** with the Committee of the Regions, inviting local and regional authorities to engage in shaping their regions’ future (announced in the European Democracy Shield).
2. **Foster inspiration, connection and mutual care** by *building intergenerational partnerships* with libraries, museums, sport organisations and community centres, as well as cultural, academic, creative, forward-looking programs such as:
 - a. Promoting intergenerational cultural exchanges and inclusion in line with the Culture Compass for Europe.
 - b. Highlighting inclusive, accessible and sustainable transport solutions for all generations through the European Mobility Week 2026.
 - c. Promoting intergenerational activities through sport, particularly initiatives that unite generations and provide easier access to sport and physical activity for all ages – with a #BeActive EU Sport award for the category “across generations”.
3. **Safeguard and regenerate public spaces for strengthened social cohesion and sustainability** through the *New European Bauhaus initiative* and its community-led activities and through knowledge on the role of public spaces for democratic resilience.

Inspiring practices across EU Member States

- **Across Europe, the project Phōnē** - Giving Minority Languages a Voice is focused on promoting cultural and linguistic diversity by connecting minority language speakers across Europe, fostering intergenerational storytelling and community theatre productions.
- **In Slovenia, The Pulse of European Literature** translates and promotes contemporary European works to foster European identity and inclusivity, engaging audiences of all ages through intergenerational collaboration and digital media.
- **Across Europe, the European Heritage Volunteers** programme revitalises heritage sites through "Traditional Crafts in Practice" training courses, bridging generations and cultures, and demonstrating sustainable heritage practices for climate resilience.
- **In France, “La république des hyper voisins”** regroup inhabitants of a Paris neighbourhood to organise once a year an event where everyone is invited to connect by eating together in the street.

5. Mainstreaming intergenerational fairness across EU policies

Intergenerational fairness is not a new policy field. It is an invitation to look more clearly at the long-term consequences of existing choices and to make sure that the cost, risks or constraints of our decisions taken today will not be shifted from one generation to another.

Mainstreaming intergenerational fairness across policymaking is one of the key objectives of this strategy. Unless it is systematically factored into the design, implementation, and evaluation of policies, it cannot be effective. Intergenerational fairness should therefore not be treated as a separate policy strand, but as a guiding principle underpinning all our policies and spending. It requires, among other things, that we protect young people not only through smart investment, but by ensuring they are not left to service the debts of the past. It requires tools to make sure that the reforms we start today are designed with their long-term impact in mind. It also requires to ensure the interests of seniors are integrated in policymaking. This approach is reflected in the *Multiannual financial framework* (notably via the European Social Fund⁺²⁹) or the *European Semester*, which is the framework for economic and employment policy coordination in the EU, by adopting long-term reforms that are both adequate and sustainable. Within this framework, the European Commission - as an employer - can lead by example, by reinforcing its commitment to zero tolerance of age-based discrimination and by fostering intergenerational collaboration within the workplace.

The EU already acts in many areas with the idea of bringing in significant long-term effects. The purpose of this section is therefore to highlight where integrating an intergenerational perspective adds clear value, strengthens coherence, and supports the durability and legitimacy of EU action in the light of its commitments to the Pact of the Future and the Declaration on Future Generations.

... by Building competitiveness without resource depletion

Intergenerational fairness depends on Europe's capacity to remain competitive, innovative and economically resilient over time. To safeguard the wellbeing of future generations, growth must be pursued in a way that does not deplete the resources on which their wellbeing depends. Investment in future-oriented industries creates quality jobs within Europe, strengthens sustainable competitiveness and supports leading strategic autonomy and a robust, competitive economy. Future proof, sustainable economic and industrial policies that foster competitive markets are vital for quality employment and sustainable public finances. Investment in infrastructure and innovative companies are equally essential to expanding opportunities for both current and future generations.³⁰ By supporting productivity, strategic autonomy and the development of future-oriented industries, competitiveness contributes to intergenerational fairness by ensuring that future generations inherit strong capital, social and environmental assets, as well as a robust and adaptable economic base.

²⁹ The European Social Fund + can support many actions that mitigate the impact of demographic change, such as access to employment (including for older people, youth and women), access to childcare and long-term care services, education and skills, and the implementation of the Child and Youth Guarantees. This focus is further reinforced in the Commission's proposals for the next MFF, which introduce a dedicated ESF article on demographic change.

³⁰ See for example the [European industrial strategy](#), the [Competitiveness Compass](#) or the [EU Startup and Scaleup Strategy](#)

... Investing in people and promoting a strong European social model

Intergenerational fairness is strong where policies expand people's capacity to participate, adapt, and plan across their lives. This means strong social protection and care systems, where everyone, at every stage of life, can rely on support when needed.³¹

Skills and lifelong learning are central to ensuring that all generations can adapt to economic and technological change, while enabling older workers to remain active. EU initiatives such as the *Union of Skills* and the *European Education Area* support Member States in anticipating and responding to skills needs, promoting up- and reskilling to prolong working lives, closing the digital skills gap, modernising education and training systems, and where needed attracting talent from outside Europe.³² The *Blue Carpet Initiative* included in the EU Startup and Scaleup Strategy supports the attraction and retention of highly skilled professionals, students and researchers to *Choose Europe*.

Strong cultural and sport policies play a central role in advancing intergenerational fairness, strengthening social inclusion and underpinning long-term sustainability by fostering participation, solidarity and shared values across age groups.

EU programmes such as Erasmus+ support skills development, active citizenship and lifelong learning for all age groups, help foster the development of social and intercultural competences, critical thinking and media literacy and (particularly through its youth strand) promote intergenerational fairness and learning. The *European Solidarity Corps*³³ supports intergenerational teams of volunteers at local and regional level to acquire skills, key competences and European values, contributing to intergenerational solidarity and fairness.

Housing affordability has emerged as a particularly visible intergenerational challenge.³⁴ Young people increasingly face barriers to accessing social, well-connected and affordable housing, while many older people live in inadequate or isolated conditions. EU action contributes through investments, enabling measures, driving reforms and targeted initiatives that improve access to affordable and adequate housing, complementing efforts at national, regional and local levels.

Ageing societies also raise intergenerational questions around adequacy and sustainability of pensions, health and long-term care, whereby intergenerational fairness means balancing adequacy with fiscal sustainability.³⁵ Tackling challenges arising from demographic and labour market transformations requires a broad policy mix, including strengthening supplementary pensions to provide additional income in old age for retirees.³⁶

³¹ EU programmes such as [EU4Health](#), or initiatives like the [Quality Jobs Roadmap](#), the upcoming *Anti-Poverty Strategy*, the strengthened *European Child Guarantee*, the *European Care Strategy* and the [Council Recommendation on access to affordable high-quality long-term care](#) aim at strengthening access to care and supporting caregivers, fostering quality jobs, ensuring access to key services and protections and breaking cycles of poverty.

³² The *Union of skills* adopted by the Commission in 2025 aims to support the development of quality, inclusive and adaptable education, training and skills systems to empower people across Europe with the skills they need to thrive, and increase the EU's competitiveness, with initiatives such as a Basic Skills Support Scheme, an EU Teachers and Trainers Agenda, European School Alliances, and a 2030 Roadmap on the future of digital education and skills.

³³ [European Solidarity Corps](#) | [European Youth Portal](#)

³⁴ The European Citizens' Panel on Intergenerational Fairness highlighted the importance of *safe homes, strong communities, and dignified living for all generations*.

³⁵ The Commission will publish in 2027 several reports on social protection systems. The Report on Adequate Social Protection in Old Age will analyse in an integrated manner how European social protection systems help protect living standards of the older population through pension, long-term care and related policies, while the 2027 Ageing Report will focus on projections showing the economic and budgetary impact of an ageing population over the long term, covering the period up to 2080.

³⁶ The Commission has issued in November 2025 a set of initiatives, to promote the development and uptake of supplementary pensions in the Member States, including the [Commission's Recommendation on Pension tracking systems, pension dashboards and auto-enrolment](#), C/2025/9300 final.

The **European Preparedness Union Strategy**³⁷ – in line with the Niinistö report “Safer Together – A path towards a fully prepared Union”³⁸ – promotes a whole-of-society approach to preparedness and security with actions directed to younger and older generations and vulnerable people.³⁹

The European Democracy Shield and the EU strategy for civil society aim at strengthening democratic resilience by adopting a whole of society approach, amongst others by strengthening civic participation and intergenerational connections.⁴⁰ Safeguarding the integrity of today’s democratic system contributes to ensuring that future generations inherit a political environment based on transparency, participation and accountability, which is a core prerequisite for intergenerational fairness.

... Advancing the twin transition within planetary boundaries

The EU’s green and digital transition have clear intergenerational implications. They call for a rethinking of how the EU uses resources, protects its ecosystems, equips workers, businesses and citizens, delivers competitiveness, respects the ecological limits within which future generations must live.

EU climate and environmental policies are at the heart of EU action to safeguard the planet for those yet to come. Intergenerational aspects are intrinsic to climate policy as any delay in action implies higher costs for future generations. The flagship initiatives of the *European Green Deal* and the *European Ocean Pact* aim at reaching climate neutrality, reducing emissions and use of finite resources, decrease pollution, increase circularity, protect biodiversity and support green transitions across sectors to build a competitive economy. The EU-owned space-based assets like *Copernicus* and *Galileo* provide data with unmatched precisions and enable monitoring and informed decision making. The *European Climate Pact* brings together communities, individuals, organisations from all over the EU and across various generations to exchange best practices, develop climate solutions and help build a clean and prosperous Europe. The *European Preparedness Union Strategy* calls for reinforcing volunteering and strengthening citizenship and preparedness skills. The *Just Transition Mechanism* including the *Just Transition Fund* and *Platform*, as well as the *Social Climate Fund* help prevent new inequalities by supporting regions, communities, vulnerable households, transport users and small businesses most affected by the transition, ensuring that climate neutrality leaves no one behind.⁴¹ Initiatives such as the *All-Atlantic Ocean Research and Innovation Alliance’s Blue Intergenerational Programme* and the *EU Bioeconomy Youth Ambassadors Programme* empower youth to engage in policy discussions on the ocean and water, on sustainable food systems and bioeconomy. The upcoming EU Water Resilience Stakeholder Platform has dedicated seats for youth representatives, in line with the *Water Resilience Strategy*.

The digital transformation and the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) present clear opportunities for Europe to improve the well-being of its citizens, foster sustainable innovation, bolster the European scientific system and reinforce its competitiveness. EU digital and skills initiatives contribute by supporting digital literacy, fair labour transitions and the responsible

³⁷ [EU preparedness union strategy](#)

³⁸ [Safer together: A path towards a fully prepared Union - European Commission](#)

³⁹ See for instance Action 29 on school curricula, Action 30 on youth programmes and Action 27 on awareness about risks and threats, which has a component on vulnerable people,

⁴⁰ [European Democracy Shield and EU Strategy for Civil Society](#)

⁴¹ The Commission published its first [recommendation on addressing transport poverty](#) in May 2025. It highlighted the vital role of transport in promoting economic development, wellbeing and social fairness by supporting access to quality jobs, including for people at risk of poverty and social exclusion and certain vulnerable groups of society, as well as its contribution to enhancing intergenerational fairness and solidarity.

use of AI in ways that will be crucial to build the workforce of tomorrow. The EU is also building a favourable ecosystem to encourage breakthrough innovation in new technologies such as AI, neurotechnology and quantum that is human-centred, ethical and right-based.⁴² Intergenerational fairness in the digital age therefore requires ensuring broad access to digital infrastructure, inclusive skills development across all ages and particularly for seniors, as well as a human-centered deployment of AI and innovations that expand opportunity rather than reinforce divides.⁴³ In line with this, the Commission has launched a pilot programme of small grants for intergenerational media literacy learning projects.

Space technology underpins access to essential services, economic growth and environmental resilience. Currently, the space domain is becoming increasingly congested – expanding risks to our space assets and security. Initiatives such as the *EU Space Act* and the *Vision for the Space Economy* are key to ensuring that space is safe, secure and sustainable for future generations.

... Delivering impact through local and global action

Intergenerational fairness is especially tangible where access to livelihoods, assets, and opportunities is at stake. In agriculture, fisheries and rural sectors, ageing workforces and high barriers to entry threaten long-term viability. EU policies support generational renewal by improving access to land and sea, finance, training, and knowledge transfer, and by strengthening rural and coastal areas as places where young people can build viable futures.⁴⁴

At local and regional level, strong, connected communities help translate long-term policies into lived experience, supporting cooperation across age groups, enhancing inclusion and reducing isolation, particularly in contexts of demographic change,⁴⁵ urbanization,⁴⁶ or territorial disadvantage. Access to services, mobility, shared public spaces, local social and cultural infrastructure influences whether people of different generations can participate fully in economic, social and democratic life. EU action, particularly through Cohesion and Agricultural Policy, supports national, regional and local authorities in strengthening community-level resilience through territorial investment, inclusive urban, coastal and rural development,⁴⁷ and improved access to services. It aims at ensuring a *Right to Stay* and thrive in places that people call their homes.

At global level, the EU's approach is anchored in recent multilateral commitments. At the UN Summit of the Future, the EU and its Member States endorsed the Pact for the Future and the Declaration on Future Generations, which underline the importance of multilateralism and the promotion of a rules-based international order, with the UN at its core to promote peace.⁴⁸ The

⁴² See for instance [Regulation \(EU\) 2024/1689](#) which ensures that AI systems are safe, trustworthy, and respect fundamental rights while promoting innovation.

⁴³ The European Citizens' Panel on Intergenerational Fairness highlighted the importance of *establishing boundaries for AI use to ensure responsible access, ethical standards, and mitigate potential risks*.

⁴⁴ The [Strategy for generational renewal in agriculture](#) aims to double the share of young and new farmers, ensuring that agriculture remains innovative, competitive and resilient. It also echoes with the European Citizens' Panel on Intergenerational Fairness which highlighted the importance of strengthening sustainable farming with increased EU financial support and food security and sovereignty. Generational renewal in ocean-related jobs will be addressed in the *Vision 2040 for fisheries and aquaculture* (2026) and the *Blue Generational Renewal Strategy* (2027).

⁴⁵ The 2023 [Demography toolbox](#) highlights the risks of an ageing EU population to the EU's long-term competitiveness. It combines EU tools to national and regional policies to empower all generations, to realise their life choices and their potential in the economy and society at large.

⁴⁶ The [EU Agenda for Cities 2025](#) strengthen the territorial and urban dimensions of EU policies and streamline existing support for urban areas. Furthermore, the [Horizon Europe Mission on Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities](#) strengthens societal resilience and innovation through its explicit focus on citizens engagement and multi-stakeholder governance.

⁴⁷ To ensure that rural areas can continue to play these essential roles, the European Commission published its [long-term vision for the EU's rural areas](#) up to 2040 in 2025. Similar strategies for coastal communities and islands are expected in 2026.

⁴⁸ The European Citizens' Panel on Intergenerational Fairness highlighted the importance of *strengthening diplomacy and the EU's peacekeeping role as the primary tool for conflict resolution*

latest polls as well as the European Citizen's panels show that the *security and defence* of the EU are among the most pressing concerns of Europeans, especially young people. Achieving strategic autonomy in the EU that provides security and peace for its citizens, who are not constrained by instability, dependence and conflicts, is an investment for all current and future generations. *The Global Gateway*, the EU external investment strategy, ensures that long term investments contribute to support public policy objectives in partner countries anchored in intergenerational fairness, by promoting local skills, youth engagement, vocational education and training and decent jobs, contributing to greener and healthier societies and reducing multidimensional inequalities. EU global action on climate aims at mobilising international cooperation to deliver on the Paris Agreement and ensure a sustainable environment for future generations.

Strengthening relations with the EU's wider neighbourhood and building up defence readiness and capabilities through the SAFE instrument are investments for a peaceful future. Cooperation frameworks such as the *Pact for the Mediterranean*, support jointly owned initiatives that promote investment in skills, economic development, resilience and social cohesion across the region, recognising the role of people – especially young people – as drivers of innovation and shared prosperity.

EU enlargement is also one of the EU's most consequential long-term investments. A credible, fair, and merit-based enlargement process strengthens peace, stability and opportunity, and expands prospects for young people both in current Member States and in candidate and potential candidate countries. In this sense, enlargement is an intergenerational commitment as much as a geopolitical one. In line with the Commission's objectives, candidate and potential candidate countries will be invited to participate in the actions presented in this strategy along with EU Member States wherever possible and feasible.

6. Next steps - collaboration for intergenerational fairness

Intergenerational fairness is not a single policy, but a way of making policy that consistently considers long-term impacts and seeks to ensure that decisions taken today do not undermine but rather enhance future well-being.

Advancing intergenerational fairness requires a deliberate and sustained effort over time, rather than a one-off reform. It calls for iterative, reflective, and adaptive approaches that can evolve with changing needs, evidence, and circumstances, and that are embedded within existing policymaking processes.

Within this process, the European Commission can lead by example, by applying the principles it promotes and by making effective use of existing tools to better integrate long-term considerations into its work. Progress will depend on cooperation across EU institutions and with Member States, as well as on engagement at regional and local level.

Intergenerational fairness is already reflected in a range of EU initiatives, practices, and policy choices. This strategy builds on that reality by supporting greater coherence, visibility, and exchange of experience, and by encouraging reflection on how long-term perspectives can be strengthened within existing frameworks.

The Commission invites the European Parliament and the Council of the EU to consider, within their respective roles, how intergenerational aspects can be further taken into account in policymaking. EU Member States are encouraged to continue embedding long-term thinking

in public decision-making, in line with national contexts and competences and to increase the awareness of various aspects of intergenerational fairness.

By reinforcing these approaches, the EU can move from principles to more consistent practice, improving the capacity of public policies to balance present needs with future responsibilities and to support better outcomes for current and future generations.