

Champion intergenerational fairness and embed long-term justice in EU policymaking



A Future Generations approach is vital to the EU because its biggest challenges – climate change, biodiversity loss, and resource scarcity – are long-term and intergenerational. Decisions made today on energy, infrastructure, finance, and the environment will shape the rights and wellbeing of citizens for decades. Intergenerational fairness should therefore be treated not only as an ethical aspiration but as a governance principle guiding EU policymaking, investment decisions and regulatory frameworks. Embedding intergenerational justice in EU governance will guard against short-termism, help meet climate and rights commitments, and ensure policies safeguard prosperity, security, and wellbeing for present and future generations. The recent establishment of a [EU Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness](#) marks important progress, but this office must be empowered with a strong mandate, resources, and political backing if it is to act as a guardian of future generations.

Ireland has a strong record on intergenerational fairness

There are significant developments at national level in Ireland (including proposals for the development of a [Future Generations Commission](#)) which mean that adopting intergenerational fairness as a priority during Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union in July–December 2026 would align with well supported domestic initiatives. This alignment would boost Ireland's national momentum to create synergy between EU and domestic frameworks for intergenerational governance.

The role of Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union

The Irish Presidency has a significant opportunity to:

- 1. Advance important concepts such as Intergenerational Fairness (IGF) as a unifying governance principle, stressing the importance of embedding long-term impact assessments and foresight into EU and MS decision-making, particularly the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF).**

The EU budget is one of the Union's most powerful instruments for shaping long-term economic and environmental outcomes. Embedding intergenerational fairness in the MFF would help ensure that EU spending supports investments that strengthen climate resilience, biodiversity protection, social cohesion and sustainable competitiveness over the long term. For the Irish Presidency this could involve promoting:

- An increase of the horizontal climate and environmental spending target in the MFF to 50% to ensure EU investments support climate mitigation, biodiversity protection and ecosystem restoration, which are essential foundations of long-term prosperity and resilience. It remains the simplest and most efficient tool to ensure EU investments deliver a clean industrial transformation, securing predictable and long-term financing for Europe's competitiveness and resilience.
- Strong implementation of the Do-No-Significant Harm principle across all EU-spending to ensure EU funds do not support activities that undermine climate or environmental objectives and support long-term governance.

- A horizontal social clause in the Budget Performance and Tracking Regulation. This would provide a clear legal foundation for ring-fencing allocations for social purposes, prioritising people experiencing social exclusion and discrimination, applying social conditionalities in funding for large companies, and improved social tagging and result indicators.
 - Extension of the partnership principle to all EU funds, including directly managed instruments, with mandatory consultations, capacity building support for civil society and enforceable mechanisms for compliance with fundamental rights, rule of law and social and labour rights – including the rights of future generations.
 - Promoting the incorporation of long-term impact assessments, climate and environmental objectives, and meaningful stakeholder participation in the National and Regional Partnership Plans as these will play a central role in guiding how EU funds are spent in Member States and therefore in embedding intergenerational fairness in EU investment decisions.
- 2. Support and build on the work of the European Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport** by ensuring the portfolio is endowed with adequate independence, resources, and a mandate to embed long-term impact assessment, youth and future-generation perspectives, and intergenerational equity across EU policy-making.
 - 3. Promote the concept of intergenerational justice across other important EU guidelines currently under review, e.g. in the EU’s Better Regulation Guidelines.** This will ensure that long-term impact and foresight assessments are embedded in EU policymaking, ensuring decisions are future-proofed across all sectors.
 - 4. Use its convening power to encourage cross-Commission and cross-Council coordination so that intergenerational fairness becomes a universal principle** covering cohesion, climate, social policy, industrial transformation, and the MFF.
 - 5. Promote adoption of an interinstitutional declaration on the rights of future generations,** inviting all EU institutions (Commission, Parliament, Council) to commit to intergenerational equity as a core guiding principle.
 - 6. Facilitate structured dialogues with youth, civil society, labour organisations and other stakeholders** during the Presidency to inform policy priorities and ensure the voices of younger and future generations are represented.
 - 7. Support both national and EU future generations initiatives to mobilise intergenerational fairness as a whole-of-society principle** to connect pressing economic, fiscal, and social reforms—linking housing, pensions, climate resilience, economic competitiveness, security and other EU priorities and policy issues through a long-term lens, supporting sustainability, fairness, and fiscal responsibility across generations.

For further information see EJNI’s briefings on the [Priorities for the Irish Presidency](#) and the [Irish Presidency and the MFF](#), or contact ciara@ejni.net. For EU level discussions on intergenerational fairness see SOIF’s paper on [Advancing Long-Term Governance and Intergenerational Fairness in the European Union](#) or contact felipe@soif.org.uk.