

POLICY BRIEF | March 2022

BUILDING A COALITION FOR INTERGENERATIONAL FAIRNESS IN THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL

OPEN SOCIETY
EUROPEAN POLICY
INSTITUTE



SCHOOL OF
INTERNATIONAL
FUTURES

AUTHORS

Peter Glenday, School of International Futures

Cat Tully, School of International Futures

April Ward, School of International Futures

With support from:

Catherine Fieschi, Counterpoint

EDITOR

Ros Taylor

This policy paper was commissioned by the Open Society European Policy Institute under the coordination and supervision of **Donald Blondin**, research coordinator, and **Ellen Riotte**, head of partnerships, research and outreach.

**OPEN SOCIETY
FOUNDATIONS**

© 2022 Open Society Foundations



opensocietyfoundations.org

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The idea that responsible policymaking protects the rights of future generations and future citizens is becoming mainstream. The principle of Intergenerational Fairness (IGF)¹ has emerged as a way to fairly distribute the costs and benefits of disruptions, like the green transition, between current and future generations.

Global political leaders are increasingly aware of, referring to, and acting on the IGF principle, as recent speeches at COP26² and the 2021 United Nations General Assembly³ show. Young activists are pursuing IGF in the judicial system across Europe and globally⁴, and it has been upheld by the highest courts, not least an April 2021 German Constitutional Court case that creates a duty on all German citizens and organisations to not constrain the freedoms of future generations⁵.

These findings have resonated beyond the policy space, with a growing number of companies and civil society groups exploring their impact on future generations. In Europe, where older voters dominate the electoral system, EU member states are including the principle as a goal for their presidencies⁶, and the EU Commission President has set an ambition to ‘ensure solidarity between generations’⁷.

None of this is surprising. A range of drivers—the desire to build back better post-COVID-19 after

a time of intense intergenerational solidarity, concern about whether Next Generation EU funds are distributed fairly across generations, growing awareness of the need to avert ecological crisis, worries that representative democratic systems are not fit for long-term challenges—have led politicians to seek new ways of incorporating long-term interests into the policymaking process.

This policy brief is based on stakeholder mapping and roundtable discussions with key actors at the EU and member state level (France, Germany, Poland, Portugal) and qualitative interviews conducted at the end of 2021. It analyses the growing interest in putting into practice the IGF principle set out in the European Green Deal’s ambition—to ensure Europe is ‘the world’s first climate-neutral continent by 2050’⁸.

Across the EU, new policy practices and tools are putting IGF into practice—including dialogues, assessments, and institutions. This is happening across governments, business and civil society, and especially, but not exclusively, in youth groups. In different ways they seek to assess the impact of today’s decisions on future generations and incorporate their findings into the decision-making process. Much of this work focuses on establishing broad support among citizens for investing in the Green Deal today to address the potential harms to future generations.

-
- 1 The Intergenerational Fairness principle can be understood as meeting “the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” 1987 Brundtland Commission Report “Our Common Future”, Chapter 2, para 1. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf>
 - 2 Yolande Wright, Save the Children, talks about intergenerational equity: <https://climatenetwork.org/2021/11/13/cop26-rich-nations-betray-vulnerable-people-of-the-world/>; Decision -/CP.26, Glasgow Climate Pact mentions intergenerational equity in preamble: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cop26_auv_2f_cover_decision.pdf
 - 3 The UN Secretary General’s report, Sep 2021, *Our Future Agenda*, is framed as a “A vision and plan for next and future generations” and puts intergenerational justice and dialogue at the heart of his plans for his second term https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/unf_our_future_agenda_en.pdf
 - 4 COP 26: The teenagers suing 33 countries: *A group of children in Portugal are using human rights law to force European politicians to tackle climate change.* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/science-environment-59776108>
 - 5 The official English translation of the judgement can be found here: http://climatecasechart.com/climate-change-litigation/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/non-us-case-documents/2021/20210429_11817_judgment.pdf
 - 6 “Promoting intergenerational cooperation and the lifelong approach” Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union July-Dec 2021 and “Ensure intergenerational harmony”. Priorities of the Portuguese EU presidency January-June 2021
 - 7 Ursula von der Leyen speech, February 2021
 - 8 Ursula von der Leyen speech, July 2021

Cross-cutting findings from this research show:

- In an increasingly fractured debate, an IGF perspective can build and strengthen social consensus on acting for the long term on issues like the environment, when paired with a focus on social justice. 'Both intergenerational and social justice are at the heart of the climate change debate and it is difficult to separate the two issues'⁹. Also, the phrase 'Our freedom to act today should not be at the expense of future generations' freedoms' can be a powerful framing for citizens as well as constitutional judges.
- There is a strong appetite to develop platforms to facilitate well-designed, informed, and effective intergenerational public dialogues (bringing together civil society, the public, politicians, policymakers, and the private sector). These would explore the dilemmas, choices, trade-offs, and actions that serve as a social contract to address the major challenges facing our societies.
- National governments, often driven by environmental challenges, are slowly starting to adopt systemic governance solutions (ranging from legislative and constitutional measures, commissioners and ombudsman, to intergenerational assessments and the modification of discount factors) that incentivise innovation around long-term decision-making. However they could do much more to build long-term awareness into policymaking processes and institutions.
- The IGF approach has powerful allies. They span different communities working on issues such as public participation, democratic reform, and the environment. Others include student and academic communities and people across the private sector.
- National-level organisations are keen for the EU to take additional, visible, and authentic measures to set the lead in operationalising the IGF principle and successfully unlock a cross-European consensus for the Green Deal. Success here would 'require the EU to implement ambitious existing and new measures on IGF and be recognised for how it is championing the rights of young and future generations'¹⁰.

Key Policy Recommendations

Critical Next Steps

Most importantly, we must integrate the principle of intergenerational fairness into institutions and decision-making processes by:

- **Appointing an institutional champion** for intergenerational fairness in the EU. Whether incorporated into a current institution, like the EU ombudsman, or creating a new institution, such as an EU Commissioner for Next Generations, one body should be appointed to assess, champion, and hold the rest of the institutions to account as they integrate IGF into existing workstreams, including the policymaking process, legislation, finance, and institutional auditing processes.
- **Integrating explicit consideration and assessment of intergenerational fairness** into the European semester plans, Next Generation Funds disbursement, and the Conference for the Future of Europe.
- **Investing in building a community and knowledge resource** to support interested citizens, businesses, politicians and civil societies across the EU (and beyond). This will build further innovation, new practice, and awareness, and generate case studies of possible impact and value to real policy challenges. One example might be to explore the introduction of a finance and investment principle in foreign policy approaches and local planning decisions around the energy and digital transitions.

Expanded Recommendations

1. Build the IGF principle and IGF assessments into governance institutions and policymaking processes at an EU and national government level

Policy tools and levers and governance innovations already exist. They can help governments and other actors build intergenerational solidarity around the Green Deal and the climate transition and to operationalise the IGF principle (and, in some cases, Duty). Assessment is a particularly

9 From a German roundtable discussion participant, December 2021

10 From a French roundtable discussion participant, December 2021

important step in incorporating IGF principles in policy design, implementation, and scrutiny processes¹¹. Practical ideas for doing so include:

- **Embedding the principle into independent institutions**, either in new or existing institutions—such as the EU Ombudsman, Parliamentary Committees of the Future or Ombudsman for Next Generations—to hold policymakers accountable at an EU and member state level.
- **Harnessing assessment tools in policy and decision-making** to measure both social justice and intergenerational justice, in a way that provides both scrutiny and *ex-post* evaluation¹².
- **Building these principle and assessment tools into existing work streams** across EU institutions including through Better Regulation, Foresight, and other capacity-strengthening activities with policymakers.
- **Integrating at a national and EU-wide level**, including through planning and scrutiny of the EU Semester and Next Generation Recovery Funds.
- **Integrating approaches that can help mitigate against the risks of short political mandates into legislation, financing, taxation, and audit planning and scrutiny.**

2. Invest in intergenerational dialogues—informed by intergenerational assessment and framed around building solidarity for a new social contract, while avoiding the populist framings that drive division and conflict

Well-designed and informed dialogue can strengthen intergenerational solidarity at local, country, and EU-wide levels. Political, civil society, and media leaders need support to navigate the political narratives around these dialogues. Two things are critical. First, IGF must not be made the enemy of social justice. Second, the discussion must broaden to include the full range of relevant IGF issues to citizens. The scope of these exchanges must be wide and build intergenerational consensus towards societal transformation, not just a focus on climate or environmental issues. The array of relevant issues includes jobs, housing, and political access.

- **Convene a series of citizen and stakeholder intergenerational dialogues**, based on the principles of participatory foresight, to promote solidarity, build coalitions for change, and bridge the gap between older and younger people.
- **Integrate IGF assessments into the dialogues of the Conference for the Future of Europe.** Doing so will help build commitment to taking this agenda forward meaningfully¹³.

11 The UN Secretary General proposes a “UN Special Envoy to ensure that policy and budget decisions take into account their impact on future generations” in [“Our Common Agenda”](#). Think2030 called for “long-term impact assessments of current public policy plans, programmes, proposals and subsequent investments” in their [Future Generations and Intergenerational Equity report](#) and Portland’s UK public research for the [Tomorrow for Today campaign](#) showed a high degree of support and appetite for increasing long-termism in politics and institutional change among the UK public, with the top recommendations being “Force the Government to report the impact its actions or policies will have on future generations” and “Require public authorities, when procuring goods, services or works, to take into account the impact it will have on future generations”, all in 2021.

12 An example of one such tool is the [intergenerational policy assessment framework and tool](#) developed by SOIF and The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation that can help policymakers, media, think-tanks and civil society to assess the impact of public policies on present and future generations. An associated tool, [FutureCheck](#), piloted in the UK Parliament, is a citizen-led service designed to help parliamentarians, policymakers and the public consider the long-term impact of proposed legislation.

13 “The conference should enable Europeans to be offered a societal project for the coming generation. The challenge is to identify what model we intend to build and what shared vision we want to develop... Throughout 2021, a national segment of the conference will put citizens at the heart of the proceedings.” Quote from the [Council of Ministers’ meeting – French presidency of the Council of the European Union – Statement](#). November 2020.

- **Communicate in a way that empowers young people**, helping citizens to have a voice and engage meaningfully with both legislators and policymakers, and adopt advocacy approaches with the media.
- **Build political awareness**, for instance by working with the Ministers of the Future network and developing a more structured engagement with European Parliamentary groups.

3. Support the operationalisation of the IGF principle in financial and investment decisions, in addition to mainstreaming it as a legal and policy principle

The financial investment community and business are among the earliest adopters of the IGF principle, and should be supported. They include actors in climate transition finance, as well as companies and industry bodies that are integrating IGF into new forms of financial standards, governance, and monitoring and evaluation. One way to achieve this would be to require long-run sustainability as a condition for investment in green financing and beyond.

4. Integrate the IGF principle into EU foreign policy

The EU and member states should not just champion IGF domestically, but also promote the principle in their global networks. Both geopolitical and economic benefits can result from global leadership on this agenda, and it can encourage reform and transition in various countries. This agenda could be included in the European Consensus for Development, as well as the comprehensive framework for youth in EU external action in 2022.

5. Continue to build a strong European Network on IGF—and beyond

An established and growing network of European organisations is engaged in equitable, long-term decision-making around the Green Deal. This

should be strengthened and nurtured to introduce these ideas and practices to allies. Think-tanks, activist civil society groups, civic participation and youth organisations, interested politicians and MEPs, and early adopters in business are often peripherally aware of others' work, but are not yet working as a community and network. It is also important not to neglect the potential for connections and partnerships beyond the European sphere.

- **Build on strong existing interest and efforts to create a coalition** for sharing tactics, activities, policy proposals and advocacy campaigns across the EU and beyond.
- **Connect IGF into and across communities** including academic and youth communities, emerging citizen journalists, overseas partners—building bridges with communities outside of Europe, the social impact/innovation community, and municipalities.
- **Showcase projects and case studies of different practice and examples of governance innovations** as a collective resource. This could include access to knowledge, provision of materials and toolkits, new projects and experiments, and development and capturing of success stories and examples of impact—what works, what doesn't—to support learning and innovation.
- **Identify and engage intentionally with MEPs and civil servants to build networks of those committed to understanding and integrating IGF into policy development across the EU.** Given the challenges around COVID-19, there is an important window of opportunity for engaging directly with policymakers to create momentum around IGF as it relates to policy development.
- **Establish an alliance of foundations and a multi-stakeholder Friends of Intergenerational Fairness** group that can champion and connect to allies and associated endeavours at the OECD and UN level.

PROJECT AIM AND METHODOLOGY: CAN AN IGF LENS HELP UNLOCK ACTION AROUND LONG-TERM ISSUES LIKE THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL?

Climate change, demographic trends that put representative democracy under stress, and conversations around how to build back better from COVID without penalising future generations, have made it apparent that a business-as-usual trajectory means ecological and democratic disaster. The idea that responsible policymaking includes protecting the rights of future as well as current generations is becoming mainstream, and now needs to be put into practice in the policy space. The principle of IGF promotes fair distribution of the costs and benefits of addressing societal changes, such as the digital and green transitions, between current and future generations¹⁴. As the German Constitutional Court put it in a ruling in April 2021:

One generation cannot be allowed to use up large parts of the CO2 budget with a relatively mild [emissions] reduction burden if this leaves following generations with a radical reduction burden and exposes their lives to extensive loss of freedom.

European societies are ageing, creating systemic challenges for democracies as they seek to deliver on long-term policy issues. Decisions need to be made today for the benefit of future societies and for the environment. These decisions, however, demand some sacrifices by people alive now. This cost-benefit analysis and the resulting policies and politics are steeped in challenges around representation and

fairness. In ageing societies, where young and future generations hold less political power and wealth than older generations, tensions are especially visible. The EU is leading efforts to confront this politically challenging dilemma and develop an intergenerationally fair approach. Together with its member states, it has committed to addressing the long-term environmental crisis, structuring huge new investments to support the climate transition via the Green Deal and Next Generation EU funds.

Influencing the policymaking process demands different and evolving approaches. Examples include institutional and legislative solutions such as the Youth of the European People's Party's resolution on IGF, Finland's Committee for the Future, Wales' Future Generations Act, and the German Constitutional Court's decision quoted above¹⁵, which introduced a constitutional duty to consider the impact of current actions on future generations¹⁶. These create strong incentives for developing policies that support *ex ante* evaluation of the distribution costs and benefits of the transition, and for mainstreaming associated measures like intergenerational dialogues and assessments. The EU has committed to an ambitious, intergenerationally fair agenda around the Green Deal that requires support and cross-generational consensus. It creates a unique opportunity for the EU to both share and learn.

14 SOIF Technical Report - https://soif.org.uk/app/uploads/2020/12/FrameworkforIGF_PilotReportDec2020.pdf

Think 2030 report on *Future generations and intergenerational equity* <https://think2030.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Future-generations-and-intergenerational-equity-WEB.pdf>

15 This is particularly interesting since it clarifies the point above that IGF cannot be explored independently of other considerations around justice, including distributional considerations close to home (in terms of the safety net for other citizens) and abroad. These are mutually reinforcing in both the moral claims created and the common responses needed to enact them. This is a critical message to get across to build an effective alliance for change.

16 <https://www.bundesverfassungsgericht.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/EN/2021/bvg21-031.html>

This project began with the working assumption that infusing the principle of IGF into the policy process could help address existing democratic tensions and build solidarity and political consensus to enable action on the climate transition. To address those tensions, and build consensus for action, there needs to be ongoing negotiation between the needs of different generations. This requires an understanding of how the burden of adjustment will be distributed, with the costs incurred today compared to what is likely to be lost or gained in the future. Through IGF dialogue and assessment, it is possible to highlight and make explicit who pays and who benefits from different policies. Collectively exploring and setting out the costs and benefits across present and future generations makes it easier to scrutinise government decisions about how these costs and benefits should best be shared across society.

We tested this hypothesis against a relevant societal challenge—the climate transition—in the belief that open, exploratory dialogue helps individuals and

communities understand and engage around the distribution of costs and benefits of climate-related policies, and builds long-term consensus for action.

The [School of International Futures \(SOIF\)](#), [Counterpoint](#), and the [Open Society European Policy Institute \(OSEPI\)](#) collaborated during late 2021 to explore how an IGF perspective could help unlock action around the Green Deal.

National-level conversations were held (virtually) in France, Germany, Poland and Portugal, as well as in Brussels to explore EU perspectives. Participants included democracy activists, environmental campaigns, youth groups, civil society, business, finance, and government¹⁷. In the rest of this policy brief we set out the country-level findings, highlight the key insights that emerged across the countries and at EU level, and make recommendations for moving IGF work forward to consolidate support for the climate transition.

¹⁷ Key actors working on the Green Deal, climate and/or IGF were identified for each of the four countries and across the EU institutions. An initial stakeholder mapping was conducted to identify over 50 actors per country. Participation at the events was lower than anticipated, due to the lead times and proximity to the end of year. However, the roundtables led to deeper conversations than were anticipated (see stakeholder maps and attendee lists). Additional activity and engagement were conducted through interviews, email responses, and informal exchanges to supplement the findings from the roundtables.

COUNTRY FINDINGS

I. Findings from Portugal

Portugal is leading on some aspects of the energy transition, with relatively high public support and political solidarity¹⁸. However, it is also experiencing demographic decline, with worrying signals of intergenerational conflict. Right-wing populist politics enjoy growing support, young activists are taking legal action over the failure to protect their rights, and the media depict the young as selfish because of demands that would impact job security, such as the closure of mines. There is deep concern that the poor state of public debate will not be enough to create a consensus for sustainable climate action. Although some groups, such as 100 Oportunidades and Zero¹⁹, are addressing this, the risk is even higher given inadequate government data and the lack of sustainable financing²⁰. Few networks are focusing on international fairness issues such as the climate, democratic renewal, and foresight. However, recent leadership from foundations²¹ has led to media coverage and conversation around potential government financing²².

While some fear that an IGF perspective could increase conflict by pitting generations against each other, there is stronger cross-sectoral interest in tapping into narratives of intergenerational solidarity and cohesion. People recognise that a focus on the risk to both current and future generations can counter opposition. The #GeraçõesComVoz project run by Aventura Social to promote social participation and youth engagement was cited as

a strong example²³. Elsewhere, Portugal's Court of Auditors is exploring how to reflect intergenerational assessment when it scrutinises Next Generation EU contracts.

Several forthcoming events offer an opportunity to discuss IGF. The 50th anniversary of democracy in Portugal begins in March 2022 and includes a celebration of the role of revolutionary youth and students. There is potential for Portugal to play a strong convening role through the UN Oceans Conference in June 2022 and World Youth Day in 2023, when Portugal will host millions of international Catholic youths in partnership with the Pope. Portugal also has a strong leadership role in the EU. Lidia Pereira, a Portuguese MEP and president of the youth section of the European People's Party, has championed and passed resolutions on IGF, and Portugal is also hosting the 20th Arroios Group²⁴ conference in 2023. Finally, Portugal's president is committed to social cohesion and has an ambition to ensure Portuguese citizens are represented in decision-making.

II. Findings from Germany

Conversations about environmental transitions, the Green Deal, and IGF are dominated by two major developments in 2021. First, an election focused on the environment resulted in the Greens and the Free Democratic party entering coalition with the Social Democratic party²⁵. Second, the Constitutional

18 The recent climate law was passed almost unanimously in November 2021.

19 100 Oportunidades is an initiative aimed at opening up public debate in Portugal and ensuring inclusion of young voices. Zero is an NGO working on ecological issues and public engagement, including work on IGF dialogues.

20 This makes it more difficult to identify and respond to the impact of the Green Deal measures on individuals, organisations, and communities.

21 Such as the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Aga Khan Foundation, and Francisco Manuel dos Santos Foundation.

22 See the [Gulbenkian report on Portugal's "Environmental Boundaries: The Intergenerational Impacts of Natural Resource Use"](#).

23 <https://aventurasocial.com/>

24 The Arroios Group consists of EU member countries that have parliamentary model of government.

25 Under the new coalition, the co-leader of the Greens became the Minister of Foreign Affairs and there have been changes in the machinery of government, particularly the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection. These changes are still playing out.

Court ruled in April 2021²⁶ that Germany's Climate Protection Act of December 2019 is inadequate and a constitutional duty exists to consider the impact of policy on future generations, both in Germany and internationally.

Youth leadership and activism has been central to progress around consensus on the green transition. This has created a 'high potential' but 'high expectations' environment for the government, civil service, business, and communities. Now that the political and public will exists—at least for now—attention is focused on the practical measures needed to achieve the energy transition. Participants reported that people seem daunted by the hard work needed to make this happen. For example, hitting targets for the adoption of photovoltaics requires more electricians than are available.

Public debate will be important at the national, Länder and community level. It must be diverse both in terms of age and experience—ensuring different voices and perspectives are heard from both young and older populations. There is concern that it will be impossible to realise the Green Deal without dialogue to feed into policy and ensure the costs and benefits of the transition are fairly distributed. In Germany, there is a small but important community that has championed IGF and future generations for decades. This includes the World Futures Council, the Foundation for the Rights of Future Generations, and the establishment of Network of Institutions for Future Generations that helped catalyse governance debates. This community has experience of how to frame the debate. They use language that focuses on people's 'children' and 'grandchildren'; they deploy the term 'fairness' carefully; and they know how to build an effective narrative using a 'freedom' framing.

IGF has moved from the fringes to the heart of the democratic debate. The fault lines are now perceived to be between fairness to current and future generations, with a particular focus on the worst-off. This intergenerational perspective is also relevant to a broad social coalition—whether it is

looking to drive deep or more shallow action around just transitions—that spans both traditional and radical communities within the green movement, academia, local government, rural networks, youth, civil society, foundations, media, and unions. There is also a strong awareness of the need to connect conversations to business operations, to drive change among those responsible for the majority of emissions.

III. Findings from France

France enjoys shallow public consensus on the need for change, with limited national debate²⁷ on specific measures to support the climate transition. Proposed national measures are often met with dissent and can have an element of intergenerational conflict. Discussions of European measures such as the Green Deal are largely absent²⁸. Despite this, France holds the Council of the EU presidency for the first six months of 2022 and the Green Deal is expected to be high on its agenda as a mechanism for achieving carbon neutrality. There is concern about a potential backlash in France against the Green Deal when it comes to implementation.

IGF perspectives are common in French national debate, connecting well with the French concept of *solidarité*. These are often focused on geopolitics, social justice, climate justice and decisions around taxes, fuel, and jobs—which are a particular source of anxiety for the lower-middle class. The *gilets jaunes* movement exemplifies how concerns around opportunity, inequality, and globalisation have intersected and clashed with climate and environmental priorities. The perception is that the older generation has not fulfilled its responsibilities and needs to do more for younger people. Participative democracy and dialogue such as the *Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat* can support this, but are not strong enough to ensure government buy-in. There is also a view that big companies are the main polluters and that individuals should not have to pay the costs.

26 IGF cannot be explored independently of other considerations around justice, including distributional considerations both close to home (in terms of the safety net for other citizens) as well as those abroad. These are mutually reinforcing in both the moral claims created and the common responses needed to enact them. This is a critical message to get across to build an effective alliance for change with other advocates and social movements.

27 National measures often pre-date the Green Deal.

28 EU legislation is generally perceived as uninspiring, despite strong sentiments of solidarity and climate activism in France.

A rich community of collaborative actors are working on democratic renewal and the environment. This can be a foundation for strengthening intergenerational consensus on the green transition. This community has a tradition of developing innovative policies and ideas in recent decades—from formal democratic ideas that give more voting rights to children and future generations’ institutions in the Senate, to public debate about reparations for future generations and proposals to increase diversity in the way that France talks and thinks about youth. There is potential to build strong alliances with activist student networks.

Companies, and particularly the finance and impact financing communities, are critical and are already exploring IGF and energy transition issues. Examples include the ‘mission-driven corporation’²⁹, a new company structure with a separate governance committee (apart from the board and shareholders) that must include stakeholder representatives with the potential to include future generations—something that is being done by organisations such as Child Rights International³⁰. The banking and business sectors are innovating³¹. The Mainstreaming Climate in Financial Institutions network convened by France in COP21 was cited as an example, with 53 institutions coming together around five shared principles to focus on mainstreaming climate change, in response to a growing awareness of potential legal liabilities towards future generations.

IV. Findings from Poland

Poland has cultivated a politics of dissent around environmental issues. The Green Deal is debated in the political sphere, but as a proxy for domestic political disagreements, and Polish people expect that the government will continue to use it to stir

controversy. At the local level, there are widespread concerns about costs of living. The impact of energy transition measures on the vulnerable, including pensioners living in fuel poverty, is of deep concern. Historically, Poland also has a strong dependence on coal and an aversion to nuclear power. This has resulted in a politically sensitive debate around the cost of present and future energy. These dynamics mean that an intergenerational perspective, reflecting the concerns and interests of vulnerable populations today and in the future around the energy transition, could be transformative.

The emerging community potentially interested in IGF consists of academics, local authorities, and civil society groups, including youth groups with a strong focus on activism and supporting citizens and innovators at the municipal level to address energy poverty. For instance, we have seen local and sectoral approaches to sustainable transportation, and urban planning approaches that adopt an 8/80 approach to designing solutions (working from the perspective of an 8-year-old as well as an 80-year-old).

It was difficult to engage the government on the topic of IGF and the Green Deal. The one positive response was a representative from Poland’s Minister for the EU, designated by Poland to the EU ‘Ministers for the Future’ network. Participants were, however, clear that an intergenerational perspective could support and enrich current work in Poland by exposing the costs of inaction. However, to gain traction, quick and easy-to-conduct approaches would be needed due to the short timeframes—often 24-hour—that are available for feedback on ‘government consultations’. There were also concerns about youth voices not being heard, with young climate activists concerned about ‘youth-washing’ covering up for a lack of meaningful political engagement.

29 [La Loi Pacte: pour la croissance et la transformation des entreprises](#), Ministère de L’Économie des Finances et de la Relance, 2019

30 [CRIN’s strategy on climate justice](#), Child Rights International (CRIN) climate strategy

31 [Breaking the tragedy of the horizon](#). Speech by Mark Carney, 2015

TABLE 1

Comparison of country findings as reported by roundtable participants

COUNTRY	INTENSITY OF PUBLIC DEBATE ON IGF IN GREEN DEAL	DRIVERS OF IGF WORK	CONCRETE ACTIONS
Portugal	<u>Low</u> : A concern that shallow understanding and poor quality and diversity of public debate means that the consensus for environmental action will dissipate when measures are enacted	<u>Civil society</u> through network building, but work still at a nascent stage; <u>Government</u> becoming rapidly more interested in its potential role	Large <u>research programme</u> driven by the biggest foundation; <u>NGO-led dialogues</u> ; IGF references included in some 2022 <u>party manifestos</u>
Germany	<u>Medium</u> : Media and the Fridays for Future movement have significantly impacted the level of debate	<u>Government</u> , building upon work done by long-established <u>civil society groups</u> and <u>thinktanks</u>	Construction of an <u>IGF-centred network</u> of civil society, media and student groups; <u>Constitutional Court finding</u> and government's <u>commitment to take it forward</u>
France	<u>Low</u> , but real social justice concerns among the public about the distribution of climate transition costs, and relatively strong public participation in debates on long-term issues	<u>Civil society, industry</u>	Development of <u>assessment tools, standards, monitoring/evaluation and accounting/audit approaches</u> ; aim is to incentivise collective action while avoiding paralysis-inducing legal action
Poland	<u>Low</u>	<u>Mixed stakeholders</u> : an emerging group of academics, local authorities and civil society, including activist youth groups supporting citizens and innovators at the municipal level	None noted by roundtable participants

KEY FINDINGS: CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

While there are significant differences between the countries when it comes to the national-level debate, actors, networks, and coalitions around the Green Deal and IGF, there were also a set of strong cross-cutting themes.

I.

In an increasingly fractured debate, an IGF perspective can build and strengthen social consensus on long-term action. The link to social justice is important because both intergenerational and social justice are at the heart of the climate change debate. It is critical that these goals are seen as mutually reinforcing rather than opposing—as they are sometimes framed by populist, far-right leaders³².

There is general, superficial agreement that it is important to act to support the climate or the green transition³³. Differences in cross-generational perspectives were perceived to be less extreme than the media or public discussion suggest, with more uniting than dividing populations. This is true at a national level, and particularly as the focus shifted to the local and municipal level. Greater effort is needed to understand these attitudes and implications.

The consensus may fracture when the realities of policy measures become tangible. Consensus around the green transition is expected to weaken when individuals and communities understand more fully the costs involved. In Germany, for example, ambitious government policy measures and targets mean implementation practicalities have come to the fore³⁴. This phenomenon is likely to be replicated elsewhere.

Growing signals of conflict are manifesting between generations. Polarising narratives that pitch generations against each other—even where there is relatively strong bipartisan support for the

climate issues—are concerning. These narratives may be born from intergenerational frustrations and the accusatory tone of youth movements as they express frustration around the lack of action and agency, suggesting ‘old people are the problem’, while other demographics feel their ‘freedoms’ are being restricted. An IGF approach helps move conversations away from zero-sum framing of the young versus the old, which can be useful to bridge generational conflicts.

Some political and civil society leaders profit from and amplify generational conflict. In Poland, for example, the climate debate is perceived to be politicised by a government who has perverse incentives to promote a ‘rally round the flag’ effect, aiming to reduce consensus and highlight divisions. The media is also a powerful force in crafting an (often negative) narrative around a narrow set of voices. More effort is needed to balance the national debate and political and media narratives to support intergenerational solidarity around the Green Deal. This will require advocacy, and suggests a mediating role for the EU, both at home and internationally.

An IGF narrative must emphasise that justice for the future does not come at the expense of vulnerable and marginalised groups today. Effective reframing and mobilisation of potential allies and supporters will not happen unless it is clear that IGF claims are compatible with social justice claims and do not come at their expense. There was broad consensus that an intergenerational focus should not be pitched at the expense of a social safety net for vulnerable populations. Social justice needs to be linked with IGF. Civil society and local government are the right places to enable detailed conversations around IGF and social justice.

³² From a German roundtable discussion participant, December 2021

³³ This was true across all countries, although there were nuances around the drivers and origins of solidarity.

³⁴ For example, the availability of electricians to make the necessary housing and infrastructure transformations to hit targets on time.

There are already innovative examples across civil society. However, too often they are not connected to national or Europe-wide conversations on the Green Deal. The perception is that the conversation in Brussels is not connected to those happening elsewhere.

These apparent conflicts between generations do not stand up to scrutiny. While genuine differences between generations do exist, the view was that many perceived differences are not real, or that there are greater areas of consensus that can support solidarity. For example, the Poland case study revealed that intergenerational attitudes are less disparate than might be expected—there are similar attitudes around the *importance* of climate change and *willingness* to change, and opinion polls show widespread support for a transition to renewables³⁵. The German case study revealed that a cross-society consensus for action around the green transition has emerged over the past four years.

An intergenerational impact perspective and framing is a useful contribution to political debates around the climate transition and the Green Deal—it builds a common understanding of impact and stress-testing measures. Across the countries there was excitement about how integrating an IGF perspective—one that reflects the concerns and protects the interests of vulnerable populations today and in the future around the energy transition—could be transformative. This framing has the potential to help shape an effective debate between generations, informed by and understanding of how the costs and benefits of the green transition are shared, and to build action-oriented consensus despite apparent generational cleavages in political narratives.

II.

Well-designed and effective dialogues support civil society, the public, and politicians. They build intergenerational platforms for action that serve as a social contract to address the challenges of the coming decades: ‘Freedoms of future citizens as well as current freedoms’³⁶.

An IGF impact perspective is a helpful frame for conversations around the climate transition and the Green Deal. Identifying the impact of policies on future generations as well as those alive today is a new and useful contribution to traditional intergenerational exchanges. Participants considered that a focus on ‘social cohesion’ and ‘intergenerational solidarity’ would appeal to both citizens and politicians. Multi-stakeholder dialogues that bring old and young together are critical for cohesion and consensus-building around measures for environmental change. Examples of good practice can be seen at the local level and are key to building society-wide commitment to change.

An IGF lens can offer a new perspective on some of the geopolitical and national issues around the energy market. These manifested differently between countries, but discussions of nuclear energy, fossil fuels and renewables reveal common IGF issues: nuclear power in France, coal in Portugal, green energy in Portugal, and gas in Germany. There is a sense that national governments are not good at genuine and authentic listening that is then connected to deliberation—citizens are seeking nothing less than a new social contract.

35 <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2212>

36 From a Portuguese roundtable discussion participant, November 2021

III.

National governments, often driven by environmental challenges, are slowly adopting ways to incentivise innovation around long-term decision-making

National governments and public bodies are developing some systemic and innovative solutions to incentivise a just transition. The range of options spans from legislative and constitutional measures, to institutional innovations around commissioners and ombudsman, and to processes, such as assessments or changing discount factors to support long-term decision-making.

There is growing support for innovation and experimentation at the national and supranational level, based on the recognition that behavioural and demand-side changes need to be supported by supply-side changes. The costs of the green energy transition should not fall too heavily on the ordinary consumer. Rather, governments (supported and led, where appropriate, by the EU) need to set incentives and frameworks to enable these changes. However, this will require governments to develop the internal governance capabilities and the tools to steward change, as well as set the conditions for business and utilities to work in.

IV.

There are powerful allies for using an IGF approach to unlock and advocate for action on the Green Deal—democratic reformers, environmental and climate activists, student communities, and across the private sector

Representative and youth networks have huge energy and motivation that could form a foundation for potentially exploring problems of mutual interest. This is true for environmental and climate as well as social justice grassroots movements (e.g., *gilet jaunes*). These groups could find it valuable to participate in intergenerational dialogues designed to explore the costs and benefits of the climate transition³⁷.

The finance and private sectors are critical and important allies, with a key role for social innovation. There is debate around potential liabilities if the sector mismanages the green transition. Internationally, networks such as the Mainstreaming Climate in Financial Institutions network or the Alpbach Forum are promoting intergenerational principles, and new 'for-public purpose' company structures are being explored which require governance mechanisms that represent interested stakeholders (arguably including future generations). Other companies are experimenting with similar innovations—for instance, Riversimple's six guardians. The accounting and audit professions and international standards agencies are integrating IGF and sustainability into their products and guidance.

³⁷ The [Future Generations and Intergenerational Equity](#) report by Think2030 provides a series of recommendations for the EU Commission including the need to develop [impact assessments](#). A first [Global Intergenerational Week](#) is being organised by a UK-led team to drive international debate. The Child Right's International Network (CRIN) has established climate justice as a core principle for their work and has reformed their governance to place children and young voices at the heart of their governance structures.

Universities and educators have the potential to be powerful allies in educating the next generation. This goes beyond just education, with the opportunity to really integrate IGF principles and assessment into the values, ethos, and curriculum of legal, economic, business administration and public policy programmes. Leading European and international academic institutions, such as a university integrating planetary health as a core principle and INSEAD integrating sustainability into its activities, are strong candidates for collaboration.

V.

There is appetite for the European Union to take additional, visible, and authentic measures to set the lead in putting the IGF principle into practice to successfully unlock a cross-European consensus for the Green Deal

There is a lot more that the EU needs, and can do, to ensure that the promise of the Green Deal is realised, including addressing a perceived disconnect between national and EU-wide conversations.

This is partly a question of priorities and action. ‘For this to be successful, [it will] require the European Union [to be] ambitious [using] existing and new measures—as well as be recognised for how it is championing the rights of young and future generations’³⁸. Local and public conversations are disconnected from both the conversation and the content of the Green Deal. In France, public and political conversations around the climate were seen as divorced from those happening in Brussels. Elsewhere, national narratives are dominating, and potentially opposing the positive steps and narratives behind the Green Deal. In Germany, there is a sense of weariness, and concerns that fault lines are already starting to appear. Across all countries there are concerns that solidarity will dissipate as the measures and impacts of the Green Deal start to be felt.

Much more needs to be done to integrate intergenerational perspectives into EU-level policy development, whether through dialogue

or other activities. This must be seen as truly authentic—representing, listening, and responding to concerns—not ‘youth-washing’. It will require genuine and sustained engagement in a way that builds solidarity and that recognises and respects both polities and politics. There is a need to bring the conversation out of Brussels. Media, outreach, and other mechanisms that can support engagement in Europe and internationally, while also bringing potential economic and political benefits to Europe.

The EU is not getting enough credit for the radical steps and measures it has already taken in the interest of current and future generations.

Significant progress has been made through the Green Deal, Next Generation Recovery EU Funds, and other instruments. There was also recognition of progress made around Better Regulation in Europe and the adoption and promotion of the use of foresight assessment and strategic foresight capability-building, led by places such as ESPAS and the Joint Research Centre. This developing work on anticipatory governance and foresight affords a significant opportunity to shape how political leaders engage and support intergenerational dialogue. The newly formed European Ministers of the Future was seen as an important vehicle and network for building genuine and authentic dialogue. A growing community and network across European institutions has an appetite to explore long-term thinking, and a clear commitment to building EU solidarity for current and future generations. The European Year of Youth, New European Bauhaus and conversations about Better Regulation in Europe are examples of planned activity where these types of conversations and dialogues can be integrated, and an agenda co-created with intergenerational voices. The most critical opportunity is to integrate an IGF perspective into the Conference on the Future of Europe, and its follow-on agenda. There was a view that these activities represent a great opportunity to support Europe’s soft power: by setting an example globally for how to deliver on the climate transition; by acting as a model for how to build intergenerational consensus and active supporting countries in the Middle East and Africa to engage their youth in conversations around the transition; and by using instruments such as the Youth Action Plan to engage internationally.

38 From a French roundtable discussion participant, December 2021

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT STEPS BASED ON KEY FINDINGS

I.

Build the IGF principle and assessments into governance institutions and policymaking processes at an EU and national government level

The EU and nation states can build on and learn from the significant innovation and existing practice in this area. This includes levers and tools to build intergenerational and intra-generational solidarity around the Green Deal and the climate transition; to support delivery on national commitments enshrined in the Green Deal; and to operationalise the IGF principle (and Duty, in some cases). Assessment is a particularly important tool that can be used to incorporate IGF principles in policy design, implementation, and scrutiny processes³⁹. The year 2022 provides two major opportunities for scaling up and realising these ideas, with the European Year of Youth and the French EU presidency's Plan for the Conference of the Future of Europe⁴⁰.

Practical ideas include:

- **Embed the principle into independent institutions**, either in new or existing institutions—such as the EU Ombudsman, Parliamentary Committees of the Future or Commissioners for Future or Next Generations—to hold policymakers accountable at an EU and member state level.
- **Harness assessment tools into policy and decision-making** to measure both social justice and intergenerational justice in a way that provides scrutiny and *ex-post* evaluation⁴¹.
- **Build the principle and assessment tools into existing work streams** across EU institutions including through Better Regulation, Foresight, and other activities to build capability among policymakers.
- **Integrate IGF principles and assessment into major strategic national planning and policy processes at a national and EU-wide level**, including through the EU Semester and Next Generation Recovery Funds planning and scrutiny

39 The UN Secretary General proposes a “United Nations Special Envoy to ensure that policy and budget decisions take into account their impact on future generations” in [“Our Common Agenda”](#), Think2030 called for “long-term impact assessments of current public policy plans, programmes, proposals and subsequent investments.” in their [Future Generations and Intergenerational Equity report](#) and [Portland’s UK public research for the Tomorrow for Today campaign](#) showed a high degree of support and appetite for increasing long-termism in politics and institutional change among the UK public, with the top recommendations being “Force the Government to report the impact its actions or policies will have on future generations” and “Require public authorities, when procuring goods, services or works, to take into account the impact it will have on future generations”, all in 2021.

40 “The conference should enable Europeans to be offered a societal project for the coming generation. The challenge is to identify what model we intend to build and what shared vision we want to develop...Throughout 2021, a national segment of the conference will put citizens at the heart of the proceedings.” <https://uk.ambafrance.org/France-outlines-plans-for-EU-presidency-in-2022>

41 An example of one such tool is the [intergenerational policy assessment framework and tool](#) developed by [SOIF](#) and The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation that can help policymakers, media, think-tanks and civil society to assess the impact of public policies on present and future generations. An associated tool, [FutureCheck](#), piloted in the UK Parliament, is a citizen-led service designed to help parliamentarians, policymakers and the public consider the long-term impact of proposed legislation.

- **Integrate IGF lens and assessments into legislation, financing, taxation, and audit planning and scrutiny approaches** that can help to mitigate against the risks of short political mandates. Examples include working with the EU and national supreme audit bodies, offices of statistics, and ministries of finance and treasury⁴².

II.

Invest in intergenerational dialogues informed by intergenerational assessments, framed around building cross-generational solidarity and support for a new social contract and avoiding the populist framings that drive division and conflict

Integrating well-designed, well-informed, and effective dialogue processes into new, as well as existing, citizen engagement endeavours at local, national and EU level, can strengthen intergenerational solidarity. Effort is needed to support political, civil society and media leaders in navigating the political narratives around these dialogues. First, IGF must not be made the enemy of social justice. Second, the discussion must be broadened to include the full range of IGF issues relevant to citizens. The scope of these exchanges must be broad and build intergenerational consensus towards societal transformation, not just focus on climate or environmental issues. The array of relevant issues includes jobs, housing, and political access and representation.

- **Convene a series of citizen and stakeholder intergenerational dialogues** based on the principles of participatory foresight within different national contexts, to promote solidarity, build coalitions for change, and bridge conversations between older and younger people.
- **Integrate IGF assessments into the dialogues of the Conference for the Future of Europe.** Doing so will help build commitment to taking this agenda forward meaningfully⁴³.
- **Communicate in a way that empowers young people**, helping citizens to have a voice and engage meaningfully with both legislators and policymakers, and advocacy approaches with the media.
- **Build political awareness of the IGF principle and approach**, for instance by working with the EU Ministers of the Future network and engaging in a more structured way with European Parliamentary groups, including youth representatives, as well as working with MEPs and national parliamentarians at a national level.

III.

Support the operationalisation of the IGF principle in financial and investment decisions, in addition to mainstreaming it as a legal and policy principle

Efforts by early adopters of the IGF principle in the financial investment community and business should be supported. They include actors in climate transition finance, as well as companies and industry bodies integrating IGF into new forms of financial standards, governance and monitoring and evaluation. One way to achieve this would be to require long-run sustainability as a condition for investment in green financing and beyond.

42 “Our unsustainable engagement with Nature is endangering the prosperity of current and future generations. At the heart of the problem lies deep-rooted, widespread institutional failure. We need to change how we think, act and measure success.”
The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review 2021 HMT

43 “The conference should enable Europeans to be offered a societal project for the coming generation. The challenge is to identify what model we intend to build and what shared vision we want to develop...Throughout 2021, a national segment of the conference will put citizens at the heart of the proceedings.” Quote from the [Council of Ministers’ meeting – French presidency of the Council of the European Union – Statement](#). November 2020.

IV.

Integrate the IGF principle into EU foreign policy to build global solidarity

The EU and member states should not just champion IGF domestically, but also promote the principle in their global networks. There are both geopolitical attractions and potential economic benefits to global leadership on this agenda, as well as pragmatic enabling forces for reform and transition in various countries. This agenda could be included in the European Consensus for Development as well as the upcoming comprehensive framework for youth in EU external action in 2022. There are opportunities for EU member states to demonstrate regional and global leadership on the IGF principle at forthcoming events (the UN Oceans Conference, EU-Africa summit, EU-Med Group, Arroiolos Group, European Neighbourhood policy partnerships).

V.

Continue to build a strong IGF network in Europe (and beyond)

An established and growing European network of organisations is engaged in equitable, long-term decision-making around the Green Deal. This should be strengthened and nurtured to introduce these ideas and practices to allies within and outside the EU. Think tanks, activist civil society groups, civic participation organisations, youth organisations, interested politicians and MEPs, and early adopters in business are often peripherally aware of others' work, but they are not yet working as a community and network. It is also important not to neglect the potential for connections and partnerships beyond the European sphere.

- **Build on strong existing interest and efforts to create a coalition** to share tactics, activities, policy proposals and advocacy campaigns across the EU and beyond.
- **Connect IGF into and across communities** including academic and youth groups, emerging citizen journalists, overseas partners—building bridges with networks outside Europe, the social impact/innovation community, and municipalities.
- **Build showcase projects and case studies of different practice and examples of governance innovations** as a resource for the network to share. This could include access to knowledge, provision of materials and toolkits, new projects and experiments, and the identification of success stories and examples of impact—what works, what doesn't—to support learning and innovation.
- **Identify and engage with MEPs and civil servants to build an informal 'early adopters' or 'IGF champions' network** across the EU of those committed to understanding IGF and integrating it into policy development. Given the challenges around COVID and the felt political consequences for those who have not engaged in mitigating action around long-term challenges, there is an important window of opportunity for engaging directly with policymakers.
- **Establish an international alliance of foundations and a multi-stakeholder 'Friends of Intergenerational Fairness' group** that can champion and connect to allies and associated endeavours at the OECD and UN level. Countries with much to contribute to such a group include Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal and Finland.

