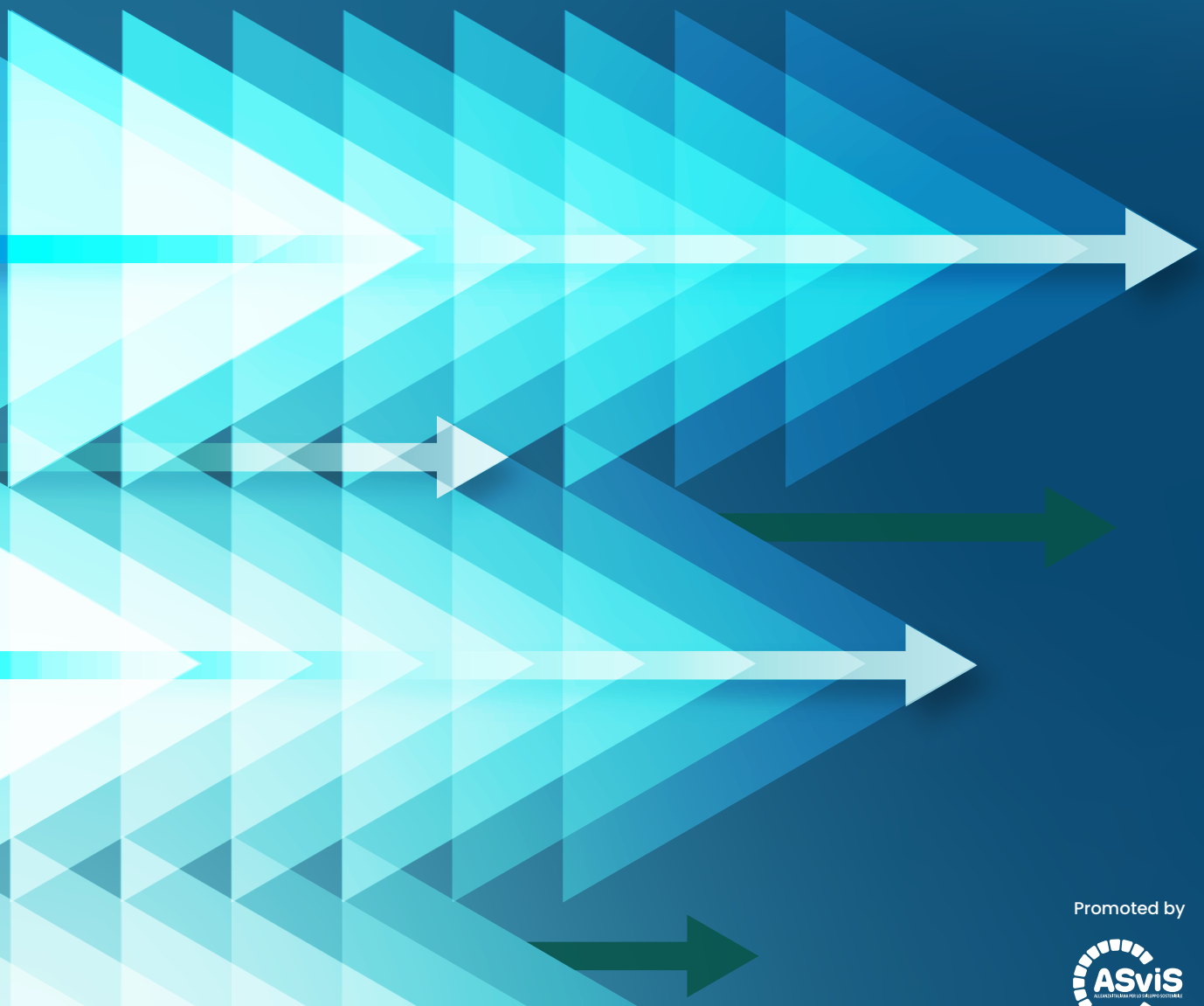
FUTURE PAPER 1 / 2026

Generational impact assessment of laws: a paradigm change for public policies

How to put the rights of young people and future generations at the heart of the choices made by Italian society

Edited by Enrico Giovannini and Raffaela Milano



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SUMMARY

In recent years a focus on the issue of intergenerational equity, and so on assessing the impact of public policies, has clearly emerged in a number of European countries and at EU level. In Italy Law no. 167, which was approved in November 2025, made it obligatory for the Government to assess the social and environmental impacts of new legislation on young people today and on future generations. In addition, the law also establishes an extremely important principle for the future development of public policy: "the laws of the Italian Republic shall promote intergenerational equity also in the interests of future generations". This Paper addresses various key issues for effective Generational Impact Assessment (GIA), not only at national level, but also locally. The constitutional reform of 2022 and Law No. 167/2025 require and foster a cultural shift that calls on political institutions to fulfil their highest purpose: recognising ourselves once again as custodians, rather than absolute owners, of the resources of our time. As the 1924 Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child stated, "Mankind owes to the child the best it has to give" — to the girls and boys of today, as well as those of tomorrow.

The Recommendations

1. Adopt GIAs as "permanent cognitive infrastructure" of the regulatory process and the drafting of policies
2. Use GIAs as a lever to shift policies from a defensive to a generative approach
3. Strengthen participation by citizens, especially the young, as a structural component of assessments
4. Guarantee the technical independence of the bodies identified as responsible for GIAs and equip them with adequate and qualified human resources and tools
5. Enhance Parliament's capacity to use the results of GIAs and to assess the intergenerational impact of amendments introduced during the legislative process
6. Ensure the timeliness of GIAs, especially in the case of Decree-Laws
7. Promote the use of GIAs locally and facilitate the exchange of good practice among the various levels of government
8. Strengthen the national information system and the ecosystem of data on childhood, adolescence and generational transitions
9. Enhance the methodological basis of GIAs by building integrated models and indicators
10. Consider the effect of mid- to long-term demographic trends in GIAs

Introduction

This document arises from the desire of Alleanza Italiana per lo Sviluppo Sostenibile (ASviS) and Save the Children to draw public attention to a truly significant regulatory innovation which has just entered Italian law: the Generational Impact Assessment of new laws. **Law no. 167, which was approved in November 2025, made it obligatory for the Government to assess new laws in terms of social and environmental impacts on current young and future generations**. In addition, an extremely important principle is set out for the future development of policies: "the laws of the Italian Republic shall promote intergenerational equity also in the interests of future generations". During the parliamentary debate, the draft law was enriched by a further important element: gender impact assessment, with the aim of ending the invisibility of girls, young women and women, who have historically been the most penalised by collective - and not just political - choices.

This is a potential revolution compared to the scant attention so far paid to injustices and inequalities between generations in drafting laws. Frequently, the burden of choices made today has been silently thrust upon the shoulders of younger people and generations yet to come. Moreover, it was not until 2022, thanks to ASviS's efforts, that the protection of future generations formally became part of the Italian Constitution[1].

It is clear that this principle of equity, this farsighted focus on the long-term effects of today's decisions, can become a powerful lever to orient public policies towards sustainable development, which is internationally defined as development that enables the present generation to meet its needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. Consequently, it is not only a question of protecting younger and future generations from the harm that may result from our short-sighted decisions, but also of making choices that allow their opportunities for development to flourish.

In recent years a focus on the issue of intergenerational equity, and so on assessing the impact of public policies, has clearly emerged also in various European countries (among others) and at EU level, as evidenced by the appointment of a European Commissioner whose portfolio specifically includes intergenerational fairness.

Today we are at the delicate stage of moving from approval of the law to its effective implementation. The law entrusts the Government with the task of issuing a Prime Ministerial Decree (Decreto del Presidente del Consiglio dei Ministri) for its implementation, while the EU Intergenerational Fairness Strategy should soon be published, with precise indications aimed at both European institutions and the member states.

This Paper addresses various important issues for effective application of the law, and not only at national level. The text was prepared thanks to the generous contribution of high-profile experts from various disciplines. Demographic experts, economists, sociologists, statisticians and experts in public health and educational policies drove the Scientific Committee[2] which directed the research coordinated by the ASviS-Save the Children Research Hub Working Group[3].

This first document, published as part of the "Ecosistema Futuro" project[4] launched by ASviS in 2025 and of which Save the Children is part, is put forward to public and private institutions as a basis for an open discussion on a decisive subject for our country's future. **The collaboration between ASviS and the Save the Children Research Hub will continue** in order to support this complex transformational process with further analyses and proposals, a process which is also impacting local and regional authorities, from municipalities to regional governments, and which must include among its key protagonists also the *Consiglio Nazionale Giovani* (National Council for Youth) and youth organisations and movements.

The first part of the text addresses the issues that have caused the intergenerational imbalance that Italy suffers from and the principles are set out

1 ASviS (2025a).

2 Arnstein Aassve, Andrea Brandolini, Silvio Brusaferro, Vincenzo Galasso, Chiara Giaccardi, Luciano Monti, Monica Pratesi, Alessandro Rosina, Stefano Scarpetta.

3 Giuliana Coccia, Christian Morabito, Diletta Pistono, Filippo Salone, Flavia Terribile.

4 See www.ecosistemafuturo.it.

which underpin the concept of intergenerational equity and have been developed internationally. The second part analyses how European policies have adopted these principles, the main experiences in various countries in the European Union are illustrated, and the new strategy is set out which is being defined in order to assess intergenerational equity in drawing up policies. The third part of the Report covers the Italian situation and analyses the elements linked to the legal system, to measuring intergenerational equity, to the availability of models for the impact assessment of policies, and sets out some experiences from the private sector. The Report concludes with ten recommendations **aimed at constitutional bodies, public administrations and private-sector stakeholders**.

Like every ambitious reform, this one too risks being a dead letter unless backed by strong civic support, by adequate investment and by instruments that can drive the reform forward. The fact that similar processes are underway in other countries and at European level offers the chance to study models that have already been implemented, learning from the successes as well as from the failures. For this reason, it is important to set up the Observatory envisaged by the new law as soon as possible, in order to continuously refine the initiatives, also in light of the lessons learned from existing and ongoing initiatives.

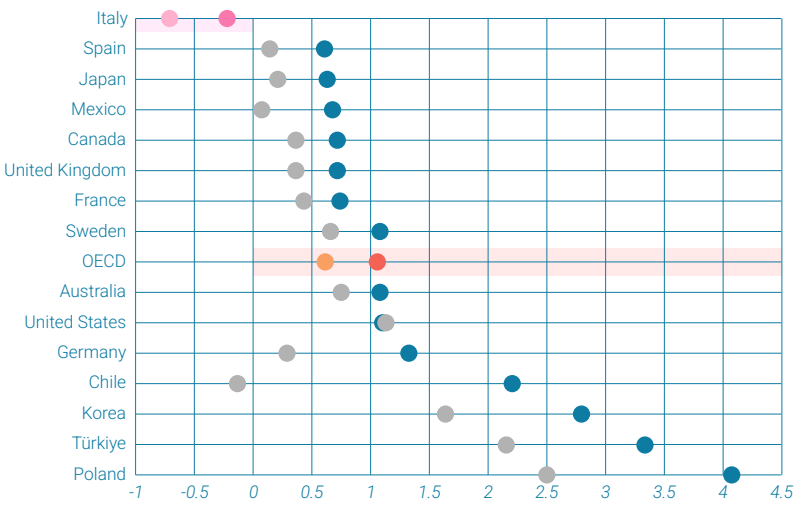
The constitutional reform of 2022 and Law No. 167/2025 require and foster a cultural shift that calls on political institutions to fulfil their highest purpose: recognising ourselves once again as custodians, rather than absolute owners, of the resources of our time. As the 1924 Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child stated, "Mankind owes to the child the best it has to give" — to the girls and boys of today, as well as those of tomorrow.

The future between demographic imbalances, public responsibilities and new perspectives of equity

The "Barometer of the Future" created in November 2025 by Istituto Piepoli for ASviS[5] shows that just 41% of citizens aged 16 and above think frequently about the future (compared to 54% of those aged 20 to 39) and that **almost one person in two states they are pessimistic about the country's trajectory over the next ten years**: just 4% are very positive about the future compared to 12% who are very negative, with significant differences between men (more positive) and women, between the over 60s (more positive) and the other generations, between the north (more positive) and the centre-south. The perception for our country's next 50 years seems very similar to that just described for 2025-2035.

People seem markedly more optimistic when they think about their own future: in fact 37% of the sample imagine their own future as very or quite positive and "only" 20% as very or quite negative. 13% believe that the future is determined by the choices of governments and decision-makers, while 42% believe that the future is open and will be determined wholly by individual day-to-day choices. Finally, fully seven out of ten people believe that Italians are more oriented to thinking about their individual present and only 6% about the common future.

If we move on from the perceptions of the population to those of the experts, Italy's future, like that of other industrialised countries, will depend on profound changes that will simultaneously impact economic, environmental and social aspects. **The latest analyses set out for Italy one of the most critical scenarios of all in the countries in the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development)**[6]: in particular, the continuation of the demographic trends that have long been a feature of Italy will entail a drastic slowdown in the future growth of per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (see Figure 1). Without structural reforms, the forecasts indicate that Italian per capita GDP in 2060 will be around 22% lower than that calculated in a scenario without the effects of an ageing population. On the other hand, the OECD's simulations show that a strategy based on increasing female and youth employment, on extending the working life, on active management of immigration and on a marked rebound in productivity could significantly limit future losses in national income.



Fonte: OECD, Employment Outlook 2025

***Figure 1**. Annual growth in per capita GDP 2006-2019 and forecasts 2024-2060*

5 Istituto Piepoli and Alleanza Italiana per lo Sviluppo Sostenibile (2025). asvis.it/wp-content/uploads/public/asvis2/files/Pubblicazioni/Futuro/indagine_Piepoli.pdf

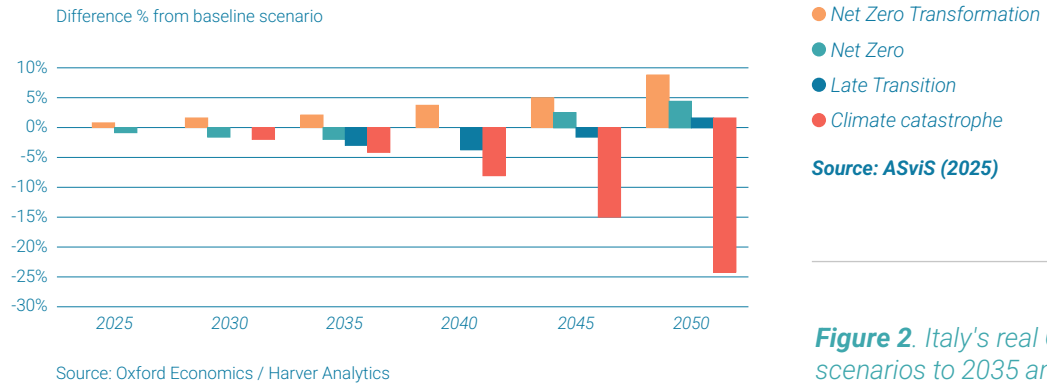
6 OECD (2025a).

The environmental aspect is also one of the most influential elements for Italy's future. Climate change, hydrogeological instability, a lack of water and urban pollution are increasingly important economic and social risk factors, given that Italy is one of the European countries most exposed to extreme climate events, with economic costs on average exceeding five billion euro a year[7].

As with demographics, for environmental questions too the future is not necessarily written in stone. Indeed the scenarios to 2030 and to 2050 for the global and Italian economy, as prepared by ASviS and Oxford Economics[8], show that policies aiming to limit global warming and to achieve net zero by 2050, accompanied by measures aimed at stimulating green investments and innovation, would have positive effects on GDP as early as 2030 (Figure 2). For example, in the "Net Zero Transformation" scenario, GDP in 2050 would be 8.4% higher than that calculated in the baseline scenario. On the contrary, a delay in the interventions, as imagined in the "Late Transition" scenario, would have negative consequences for the economy.

The future is not a predetermined space but can be shaped by collective choices. The data show the gap between pessimism about the future and more confidence in people's own future, i.e. a cleavage between the individual and the collective. Demography and environment emerge as decisive structural factors. Italy is exposed to high risks, but also to concrete opportunities: hence the urgent need to permanently integrate intergenerational justice into decision-making processes.

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Source: Oxford Economics / Harver Analytics

Source: ASviS (2025)

***Figure 2**. Italy's real GDP in the scenarios to 2035 and 2050*

7 Ministry of Infrastructure and Sustainable Mobility (2022). www.mit.gov.it/nfsmitgov/files/media/notizia/2022-02/Rapporto_Carraro_Mims.pdf

8 Alleanza Italiana per lo Sviluppo Sostenibile (2025b).

Other studies show how the green transition may offer important growth opportunities also in terms of employment. For example, according to the Circular Economy Network (2025), investments in renewable energy, energy efficiency and the circular economy could generate over 500 thousand new jobs in Italy by 2035, above all in sustainable building, green manufacture, waste management and electric mobility.

These two examples, but many others could be used, are emblematic of how Italy's "future fragments" are not a hard and fast trajectory, but mark out a broad spectrum of possible futures. If, on one hand, the country is exposed to the risk of prolonged stagnation driven by demographic decline, low productivity, insufficient valorisation of human capital and delays in innovation, on the other, there are concrete margins for growth based on education, decent work, the green transition, digitalisation and social inclusion.

So present and future choices will determine the trajectory that will characterise Italy in coming decades not only in terms of national income, employment and unemployment, quality of the environment, poverty, etc., but also the relative condition of the various generations, i.e. older people, adults and young people. For this reason too, it is essential to permanently integrate the perspective of intergenerational justice into decision-making and legislative processes, in order to systemically address the main risk factors, but also the great opportunities, seeking to improve equity between the various socioeconomic groups into which the population is broken down, broadening the capabilities for younger generations who will become adults in coming decades or for those still to be born.

Unfortunately, this has not been the approach followed here for numerous decades. Italy has public debt of over three trillion euro (138% of GDP, 50 thousand euro a head, newborns included), which costs around 85 billion euro in annual interest, and widespread tax evasion/avoidance, which causes underlying unfairness in the fiscal system. In the last 20 years, absolute poverty has increased and affects one individual in ten, with varying intensity across generations: child poverty has almost tripled and today affects around 1.3 million minors, more than 13% of the reference population, compared to 6.4% among the over 65s who are protected by the welfare system.

There is a widespread perception that this social security system will be hard to sustain in coming decades, with a declining and increasingly aged population[9]. On the other hand, the OECD (OECD 2025b) estimates that while young people in the 1990s (the current 55 to 64 baby boomers) at the time had disposable income slightly higher than that of workers aged 55 to 64, in 2016 the situation reversed in favour of the latter and their income is now 13.8% above that of young millennials.

The gradual change in the country's demographic and social structure can be seen as a process occurring on several levels: the fall in the youth population, the depopulation of inland areas, the reduction in training and work opportunities and the growing movement of talent abroad. Phenomena which intertwine and impact on the capacity of the educational, economic and institutional system to guarantee continuity and cohesion between generations, as well as the competitiveness necessary for the country to face the great challenges posed by the digital and green transition.

In this framework the persistent generational gap is an indicator to calculate the so-called "height of the wall" which young people must scale to open the three main doors which lead to an independent and adult life: finding a home, securing decent work and making a responsible choice about parenthood. According to the Fondazione per la Ricerca Economica e Sociale ETS, which in 2015 developed the Generational Divide Index (GDI), the gap between generations is tending to increase driven by the various crises that have occurred over the last twenty years: in fact, after reaching 100 in 2006, the index is now over 135 points, worsening by over a third compared to the first year it was recorded[10].

9 Italy has the highest pension spending among OECD countries after Greece, at 16% of GDP, of which at least a quarter is not financed by pension contributions (OECD 2025c). Despite the high spending on survivor pensions, the pension gender gap of 29% is among the highest in OECD countries, where the average is 23% (OECD 2025b).

10 The Reports on the Generation divide of Fondazione RiES ETS are available on the Fondazione's website at www.fondazioneries.it/ricerche/ricerche-realizzate and on the website of the Observatory of Youth Policies www.observatoriopoliciesgiovanili.it.

Demography: the dominant structural factor

At 1 January 2025 the number of people resident in Italy fell to just under 59 million, confirming a demographic trend that has been ongoing for over a decade, caused mainly by a sharply negative natural balance. In 2024 there were only 370 thousand births, the fertility rate fell to 1.18 children per woman, while the average age at first birth climbed to 31.8, a value well above the European average. Households are ever smaller: over a third consist of just one person and only 28.2% are couples with children. Marriages are declining and over two-thirds of young people aged 18 to 34 still live with their parents.

Currently, a quarter of the population is aged 65 and over, a percentage which will rise in the future (according to Istat forecasts in 2050 it will be over one-third), while only one resident in seven is aged under 18, a percentage that will fall to 13.5% in 2050. According to Istat forecasts, the overall population will continue to fall: it could drop to 58.6 million in 2030 and 54.4 million in 2050. Italy will therefore have a smaller and older population, with a steadily shrinking working-age population.

In 2024 life expectancy at birth stood at 81.7 years for men and 85.5 for women, while the forecasts to 2050 indicate a further increase to around 84.3 for men and 87.8 for women (Istat 2025a).



Given this trend, life expectancy in good health – in the sense of the average number of years without serious functional limitations – is markedly more limited. In 2024 it stood overall at 58.1 years, with a higher figure for men, at 59.8, compared to women, at 56.6, with a broadly stable trend for 2025-2028. The gap between overall life in years and the years lived in good health therefore implies an extension of the periods marked by fragility, with significant implications for individual life quality and for the sustainability of healthcare and assistance systems in the long term.

In terms of migration, the balance in 2024 was positive thanks to around 435 thousand people moving to Italy, but almost 191 thousand left it. Too many young people – often graduates – move abroad, and too few arrive each year from abroad to offset the continuing outflow. This phenomenon also influences the composition of the electorate: currently the percentage of 20 to 39 year-olds in the electorate in Italy is the lowest in Europe (26%), as is the percentage of parliamentarians aged under 40 (around 16%), also causing a high level of distrust in democracy among the youngest.

Italy is destined to record one of the largest falls in the working age population (aged 20 to 64) among all the most industrialised countries. The OECD's forecasts to 2060 indicate a 34% fall, with more limited falls in the other main European countries. Consequently, the number of elderly people supported by each working-age person in Italy will rise from 0.41 (i.e. one elderly person supported by 2.4 working-age people) to 0.76 (i.e. one elderly person supported by 1.3 working-age people). In the last 20 years, given a general rise in the employment rate, driven by greater female participation and by adults staying on the job market for longer, the employment rate for those aged 20 to 29 – which has stayed below the main European countries – fell from 54% to 49.2%. The increase in employment among women was supported above all by the growth in services, by the greater participation by mothers on the job market and by some progress in policies to reconcile work and family life. Despite these advances, the level of female employment remains below the European average and the "motherhood penalty" for working mothers remains among the highest in Europe, also due to a lower female presence in the sectors with the highest employment and pay intensity and a greater spread of part-time work among women, often against their will.

The high GDI (even higher if calculated for women and the southern regions) helps illustrate the level of intergenerational imbalance in Italy and the impossibility, for the new generations, of taking full part in the country's sustainable development.

To combat this situation, also looking to the future, public policies must regard the generational and intergenerational perspective as central, taking decisions capable of reversing the trends briefly noted here and facilitating the involvement of young people in identifying problems, developing solutions and drawing up potential legislative proposals to be adopted locally[11], making full use of their capabilities as changemakers.



11 Perkins D. et al. (2001).

The generational perspective

In all primitive societies two main groups are found: children and adults. The move from infancy to adulthood was regulated by specific rites, often characterised by tough and gory initiation tests. These rites symbolically marked the transition from a passive and protected condition to an active, responsible phase open to the risks of life.

In contemporary societies, however, there is no universally recognised threshold marking the transition from childhood to adulthood. Between these two stages lies an intermediate phase: youth. Based on age criteria, the lower limit of this phase is commonly set at around 15 or 16, when individuals are generally not yet fully independent or financially autonomous. The upper limit, however, is less clearly defined. The main international statistical institutions (United Nations, Eurostat, OECD and Istat) define young people as those who belong to the 15 to 24 age range. However, this classification, which is useful for quantitative analyses, does not capture social complexity. In fact, those same institutions recognise that the meaning of "youth" varies over time and space: the ages and conditions of being young in modern Europe are not the same as those in sub-Saharan Africa or in the Italy of the 1960s.

In advanced mature societies the period of youth tends to extend. The narrow corridor which once separated adolescence and becoming an adult has transformed into a wide intermediate phase, where the traditional steps to autonomy and responsibility are tested, delayed and redefined. In the past, this step was completed relatively quickly. In preindustrial societies, and still in the first decades following World War II, most people completed the essential steps — ending their studies, finding stable work, getting married and having their first child — by the age of 25. From the 1970s onwards, the picture changed dramatically. The increase in schooling, the instability of the job market and the redefinition of family and gender roles made the process longer and more complex. So an intermediate phase, often defined as "young adulthood", conventionally spanning the ages of 25 to 34. So being a youth cannot be reduced to a simple age range, but must be understood as a dynamic process of transition towards adult life.

The new generations

Youth is the most dynamic phase of life, in which the new generations form their own identity and define their role in a constantly changing world. Being young is not the same in all eras and the move to adulthood does not repeat uniformly across generations. Every generation lives its youth in a specific historic and social context, which determines its opportunities and challenges. For example, the generation which grew up in the years of the economic boom experienced a transition marked by certainties: stable employment, social mobility, and trust in progress. On the contrary, current generations face this phase in a context of increasing uncertainties: employment insecurity, environmental crisis, political instability and technological acceleration.

Ignoring the generational perspective means overlooking the profound differences in the constraints and opportunities that shape people's life choices. Being twenty is not the same during the Covid-19 pandemic, in the 1960s or in the 1990s since each era uniquely defines the living conditions, sensitivity and the expectations of the generations. It is therefore essential to recognise that the youth of today face different challenges and develop different perspectives compared to those of their parents or grandparents at the same age.

If being young is a transitory condition, belonging to a generation is an ascribed condition: it is not a choice to belong to a generation, but you are assigned to it by the historic context in which you are born and grow up. So considering young people as "new generations" means looking beyond their current status. The opportunities and restrictions experienced in the phase of growing up and entering adulthood influence the whole subsequent life journey: from starting work to building a family, from the levels of wellbeing and social inclusion to prospects in old age. The circumstances experienced by young people today foreshadow the social structure of tomorrow. Investing in young people makes it possible to continuously renew the foundations of the future starting from the present.

This approach makes it possible to move beyond a static opposition between younger and older generations, adopting a dynamic perspective that recognises the value of generational renewal and

to promote collaboration across generations. No society can improve without reciprocal value recognition: that transmitted by previous generations, but also that of the new generations, who bring innovation and the ability to question the present in line with the new times.

Dynamic equity

Intergenerational equity is not an abstract issue, nor can it be confined to ethical debate or claims-based perspectives. It is a central element for collective wellbeing since it is based on the dialectical relationship between the present and the new. This issue takes on particular importance in Italy, where the demographic transition has profoundly changed the social structure. We are living ever longer, but with fewer young people. The working-age population is shrinking, while the older population is growing. Without adequate generational renewal, the economic system risks losing its vitality and the welfare system becoming unsustainable.

In Italy, this situation is exacerbated by the inadequate training of young people, scarce investment in research and innovation, and policies that are insufficient to valorise the human capital of the new generations. However, guaranteeing equity does not only mean ensuring that today's young people are not in a worse situation than previous generations. It also means putting them in the right conditions to face a different world, giving them adequate instruments for the new challenges of their time. Generational equity must therefore be broken down into two fundamental aspects: one is corrective aimed at reducing generational disadvantages, and one is enabling, seeking to create the conditions for the development of the new generations' potential in a rapidly changing context.

Recognition and representation

A fair country does not treat young people merely as recipients of protection, but empowers them as active participants: citizens capable of contributing with their skills and sensitivity to constructing new sustainable development models. Generational equity cannot only be guaranteed for young people but must be built with them. Only that way can equity become a mechanism for transformation: not a simple redistribution of resources, but the regeneration of collective capabilities.

The new generations are asking not only to be listened to, but also to take active part in the decision-making processes that concern them: at school, at work, in politics, in defining public policies. Their involvement is not just a question of representation, but of democratic legitimacy: a society which does not incorporate the voices of those who will experience the consequences of collective decisions for the longest loses part of its ability to understand and to renew. Strengthening youth participation means creating stable channels for intergenerational dialogue and monitoring: observatories, indicators and consultation forums must become an integral part of governance processes, guaranteeing that public choices respond to the needs of emerging generations and promote a path of inclusive development.

From the methodological point of view, generational equity must go beyond the mere comparison between different cohorts: it is necessary to consider the cumulative impact of public policies, institutions and structural changes on the lives of young people and their possibilities for action. It is not sufficient to guarantee redistributive justice and equal formal rights: it is necessary to recognise genuine equality of opportunity and to promote the ability of the new generations to take active part in the major transformation processes — demographic, digital and environmental – which define the contemporary world.

This means measuring and reducing three gaps: that with the previous generations; that with those of a similar age in other countries; but above all that between what the new generations would like to be and to be able to do to the best of their abilities and what they are put in a condition to do in the context in which they live. The latter is perhaps the hardest gap to measure, but also the most important because it is by reducing it that effective action can be taken on the other gaps. The capital of trust and energy of the new generations is today the most precious resource to make societies more resilient, innovative and cohesive. This resource, however, must be nurtured through policies aimed not only at reducing the imbalance, but also at promoting transformative participation in building a common future.

Generational imbalances in the way of looking to the future

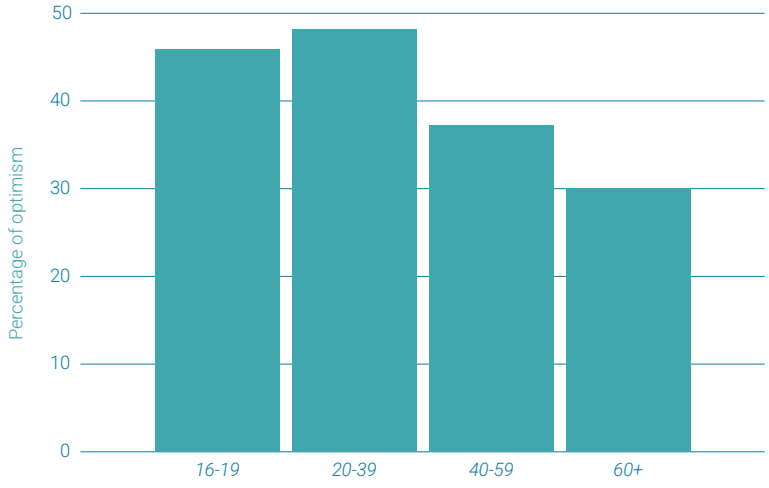
The perception of the future is not the same for everyone, but changes on the basis of age, lived experience and the position that each individual occupies in society. **Young people, adults and the over-60s observe the future from different viewpoints which are often influenced by their degree of responsibility, by their economic security and by their real possibility of influencing events**.

Figure 3, which is taken from the aforementioned "Barometer of the Future", shows that optimism about our personal future falls as age increases. Young people, especially those aged 20 to 39, are the most optimistic, since they experience the future as a space which is still open and rich in possibilities. Adolescents also tend to have a positive outlook, shaped by expectations and plans that are still taking form. On the contrary, in adults optimism falls owing to responsibilities and uncertainties linked to work and family. Finally, people aged over 60 seem the most prudent, concentrating on security and stability more than on future opportunities. Young people are the category in the population which looks most to the future. According to the Barometer, over half of under 35s state they often think about tomorrow and consider it as a space that remains open and not yet fully defined. This attitude is linked to the fact that young people are in the phase of decisive choices: study, work, relationships, identity. The future is a promise, but also a source of anxiety. Indeed, alongside personal optimism, there emerges serious worry over structural factors such as the cost of living, job insecurity and social inequalities. It is no coincidence that over 40% of young people indicate the increase in inequalities as one of the main threats for the next ten years. Nonetheless, they remain trusting in the role of technology and innovation, seeing more opportunities than dangers in artificial intelligence and science.

Adults, above all aged 40 to 59, reveal a more cautious and pragmatic perception of the future. This age range is heavily focused on the present: stable work, managing the family and economic responsibilities leave less room for developing a long-term perspective. Around two-thirds of adults state that they are focused above all on the present, while the future is seen as something to be controlled and defended, rather than reinvented.

It is also significant that, while retaining a certain degree of confidence in their personal future, many adults take a negative view of the country's future, revealing a disconnect between the individual and collective outlooks. Among this generation, the fear of losing what has already been achieved outweighs the hope of substantial improvement.

Finally, the over 60s tend to look to the future with greater detachment and often with pessimism. Having already gone through numerous historic, social and economic transformations, this category of the population increasingly puts its trust in past experience rather than in the promises of tomorrow. Older people are the least optimistic group in the population for both their personal and the collective future: for many of them the future seems to be something over which they have no real power to intervene. So their attention focuses



Source: Istituto Piepoli and ASviS (2025)

***Figure 3**. Optimism on personal future by age group. 2025*

The future is perceived differently depending on age. Young people see it as an open space, full of expectation, but also anxiety; adults are more focused on the present and on defending what they have; older people appear more prudent and disillusioned. Understanding these differences is essential in order to construct policies capable of uniting hope, responsibility and memory.

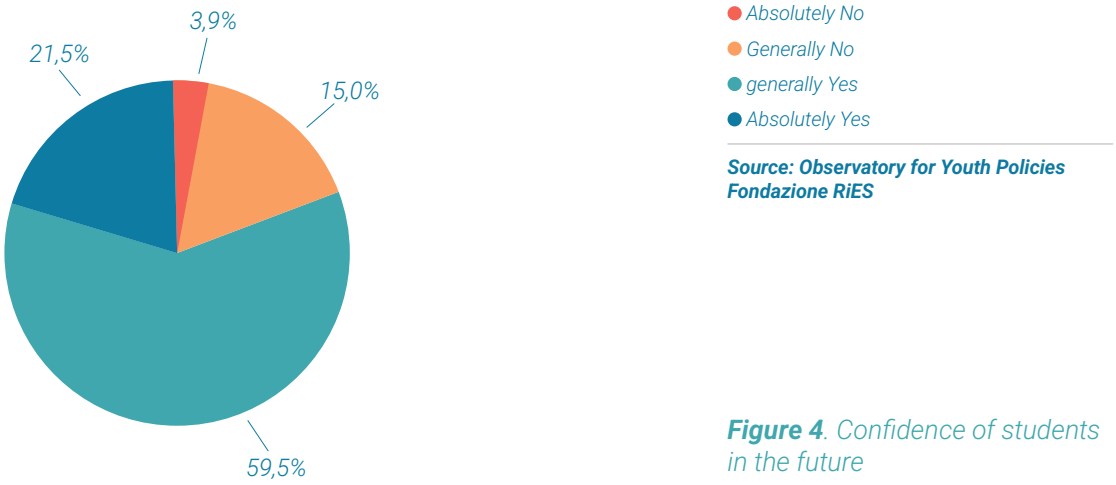
on the themes of stability, security, healthcare and welfare, which are considered essential elements to guarantee a dignified quality of life. In addition, in regard to new technologies, a more cautious view prevails, with a greater perception of the risks compared to the opportunities.

In conclusion, the comparison between generations shows that the future is not a shared or indistinct concept but deeply linked to each person's existential position: young people waver between hope and uncertainty, adults adopt a realistic and defensive approach, older people show prudence and disenchantment. Understanding these differences is essential to construct shared policies and choices that can bring together enthusiasm, responsibility and historic memory, transforming the future from a source of generational division into a shared project.

Numerous surveys address these issues, including Istat's triennial survey[12] which aims to collect information on some fundamental aspects of the daily life of adolescents aged 11 to 19 resident in Italy. In the latest edition of the survey, relating to 2023, 32.3% of adolescents stated they were afraid of the future, a phenomenon with a marked gender gap (42% of female adolescents compared to 23% for males). Concern is particularly high among 17 to 19 year olds (43.5%, compared to 21% for 11 to 13 year olds).

An update of the situation on how adolescents are positioned on this theme is provided by the annual survey on the future of young people undertaken by the Fondazione per la Ricerca Economica e Sociale ETS, which aims to explore the expectations, orientations and future ambitions of upper secondary school pupils, with a focus on the factors which contribute to structuring their perception of the social context and the opportunities and challenges awaiting them in the future. The survey, which was carried out during the 2024-25 school year through an online questionnaire (CAWI), involved a sample of 908 upper secondary school pupils.

The results point to a renewed sense of confidence in which 81.1% of pupils state that they look at their own future with optimism (Figure 4).



Source: Observatory for Youth Policies Fondazione RiES

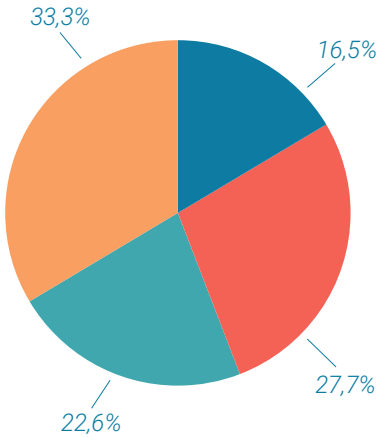
***Figure 4**. Confidence of students in the future*

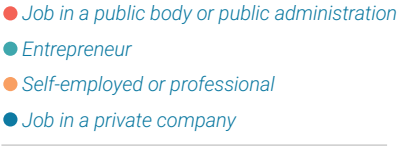
12 Istat (2025b).

That figure is higher than the 78% recorded in 2018, before the pandemic, and clearly up on the most critical phase of the pandemic (it was 74.8% in 2020). **Despite this confidence, young people clearly indicate some areas of uncertainty** which weigh on their prospects of fulfilment: in particular, the three main concerns for their future regard the possibility of securing a good job, achieving full economic independence, and protecting the wellbeing of their family, present or future.

In asking pupils to imagine their work future (Figure 5), Self-employment and professional careers were the most common aspiration (33.3%).

This is followed by expectations of employment in the public sector (27.7%), while a significant percentage see themselves as entrepreneurs (22.6%). Finally, there is a more limited percentage who see themselves as employees in the private sector (16.5%).

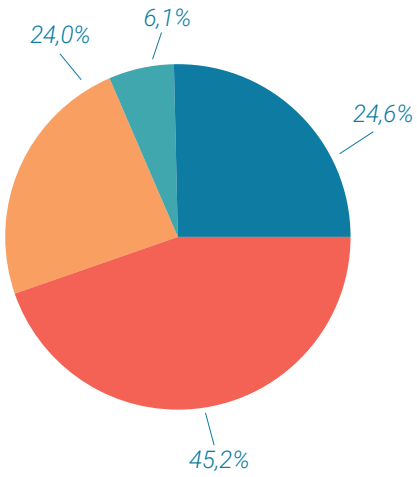




Source: Observatory for Youth Policies Fondazione RiES

***Figure 5**. Employment aspirations of students*

On the issue of individual wellbeing, exploring the frequency with which young people have felt alone or isolated in recent months, 24.6% state that they have never felt "alone", but the majority of adolescents have had this feeling at least once; indeed 24% of them have felt it "often", while 6.1% state that they "always" feel isolated (Figure 6).





Source: Observatory for Youth Policies Fondazione RiES

***Figure 6**. Feeling of isolation among young people*

Reflections on the future: young people's voices

What are the concerns, expectations and challenges that young people consider most important for their future and for that of their generation? And what are the priority responsibilities they assign to the world of adults in building this future? The coordination group of Movimento Giovani per Save the Children was invited to reflect on the issue as part of a focus group that met in October 2025, with the participation of 25 young people aged 17 to 25 from various Italian cities.

An emerging constant theme in the reflection on the future (individual and of peers) is the uncertainty around entering the job market and the low expectations on the possibility of finding a job in line with personal aspirations. For many young people, this low expectation marks a recurring and distinctive trait of their generation compared to those that preceded them, when it was possible to count on more linear and structured life journeys: study, work, family, pension.

> *"Our main concern is to have a job that lets us live securely, live well and not just survive (..). Because we are really the first generation that will not see a pension and it is worrying to think that we cannot even have a prospect for the future or to do something that lets us live a secure and relaxed life" (Emanuele, Rome, 18).*

> *"Today we don't have the good fortune to find a job immediately. There are so many people who risk doing something which is not related to their studies, for example there are many who studied economics but work as waiters, the fear of having to do something I don't like in the future really troubles me, and this is also a psychological problem" (Marouan, Turin, 24).*

Another aspect that, according to the young people interviewed, distinguishes their generation from previous ones is the desire to achieve a better balance between work and personal wellbeing—to lead a life that is not entirely dominated by work and leaves them time to pursue their own interests.

When reflecting on their limited employment prospects, the young people interviewed repeatedly mention low pay and the prospect of earning salaries that may not be sufficient to cover their basic living expenses, particularly given the increasingly demanding and costly education and training required.

> *"Education is increasingly expensive. They tell you you must be trained up, so the three-year degree is not enough, the five-year degree is not enough, you must do a master's, you must do the specialisation course for any kind of job, to become a teacher. OK, fine, but maybe not everyone can afford the luxury of a 2,500 euro course. But on the other hand, when you then join the job market, the pay is not enough to get by" (Vera, Milan, 24).*

The possibility of finding a decent, stable and adequately paid job is further threatened, according to some, also by the progress of artificial intelligence.

> *"In my sector of IT, we are at the point at which, on one hand, we use AI tools to help us in work and, on the other, we create them. So there is this funny thing of "they will replace us", but they are continuously replacing us in just this way!" (Emanuele, Bari, 24).*

Impacting on the uncertain and complex vision of their own future there is also, for many people, the weight of external expectations and the pressure of time, which moves increasingly quickly.

> *"The more history moves on, the more time becomes precious. Even just looking at content which flows very quickly, the advent of TikTok and all that has overturned the perception and the way of looking at entertainment. On the other hand, the concept of time also includes the race to work, the race to personal fulfilment, when, however, we don't know what we are racing towards" (Lorenzo, Genoa, 24).*

"One of the biggest worries is that of not managing to find success at personal and work level, i.e. to always feel the pressure of society due to which we always put ourselves down on a personal level, while in terms of work we have this idea of the 'dream job'. This is not positive, because you idealise that job and when you get it you say 'Oh, maybe this isn't what I was expecting'" (Alessia, Scalea, 17).

When the discussion moves on to considering the challenges to be faced in the next 10 or 20 years, what emerges are the conflicts, the consequences of climate change, but also the concern for the space for democracy which is contracting, the systems to control and violate privacy, the spread of fake news. Also the multicultural society comes into play, as an opportunity but also as a threat.

"We are heading in a direction for which it will certainly be necessary to create a new intercultural community and I'm happy about that. But thinking of the context in which I live it is a great source of concern – and also of hope – because not everyone is open and willing and so there could be quite serious social conflict" (Lara, L'Aquila, 22).

"At the government level they are increasingly trying to sell us control as if it were security. Recently there was the question of Chat Control (..) which proposed to protect minors by controlling chats, saying that if there is something alarming regarding minors in particular situations, in some way action will be triggered. However, to do this means that there is control around the clock, every day and at all hours, of everything that we do and write online. In that way privacy is completely dismantled" (Vera, Milan, 24).

"Disinformation and the whole question of artificial intelligence, the fake news generated artificially and which therefore does not undergo a process of fact checking, to verify the information that is actually published and spread, the algorithms that try to increasingly direct information towards particular specific areas, particular political orientations (..) It is increasingly difficult to be informed impartially, to find information that is true and transparent. And then I imagine that it is also difficult for people who work in this situation to manage to do a job that is really free" (Maria Chiara, Ancona, 20).

Looking at adults' responsibilities in building the future, difficulties and frustrations emerge regarding the failure to listen to the youngest in society on decisions regarding them and indicate which path to follow in order to restart a dialogue between generations.

"The issue is that, at a psychological level, in reality we as human beings are not prepared and somehow set up to think about the next generation, in other words we are much more self-centred regarding our time and our period" (Vera, Milan, 24).

"There is a constant infantilisation in everything that has to do with young people in regard to young people. So it doesn't matter if you are 14 or 20, if you are faced with a 50- or 60-year-old who takes decisions for you, they will always treat you as a child who doesn't know what they are talking about. They should stop seeing children and youngsters as inexpert and valorise their contribution even if it is more 'bureaucratic'" (Emanuele, Rome, 18).

"It is necessary to educate about spaces, about online communication to create, let's say, critical thought. Then we need a new way of socialising, of meeting up beyond social networks, in other spaces which either don't exist or are very limited. Then we must incentivise and valorise participation and active citizenship also from a formative viewpoint. (..) In order to educate on values and democratic practices, it is necessary to strongly back volunteering (Jacopo, Milan, 19).

The "key", according to Ludovica, is in being empathetic, reflecting on the world which may arise and calibrating policies and actions on this basis.

"I believe that those who govern should put themselves more in children's shoes, so that they can understand and reflect on the world which may come. And so understand that the world in which we live is not eternal, unlimited, we don't have infinite resources, this is the key in order to calibrate the actions, to calibrate the policies that must be mapped out" (Ludovica, Reggio Calabria, 22).

Intergenerational equity and public policies

Intergenerational equity is a legal principle recognised by international, European and now Italian law, which requires the current generations to manage natural, economic and social resources in such a way as not to compromise the possibility for future generations to satisfy their needs and to enjoy fundamental rights and decent living conditions. This definition underpins the internationally accepted concept of "sustainable development" and recalls **the universal principle that present generations must preserve opportunities and resources for future generations**. This presupposes the need to analyse and address the long-term consequences of the individual and collective actions taken by the current generation, rather than focussing exclusively on the immediate effects of the decisions.

In recent decades, the theme of intergenerational equity has taken on a central role in the global political, economic and legal debate. The gradual emergence of transnational challenges, from the climate crisis to demographic changes, from technological acceleration to growing economic instability, has made clear that public decisions cannot be limited to responding to the immediate needs of contemporary societies, i.e. of the current generation. On the contrary, they must be based on a long-term vision that also considers the impact of current choices on future generations, or on those who are still not represented, but who will inherit the results, positive or negative, of today's policies and decisions.

Besides a legal dimension, intergenerational equity has strong sociological and community foundations: it is founded on the idea of the common good and of collective responsibility and aims to strengthen social bonds and to guarantee that each generation contributes to the full development of subsequent generations. In this light, it is not just a question of avoiding negative changes to the ecosystem, but of promoting the enhancement of the freedoms that contribute to the common good, of the capacities and opportunities of future generations, so that they can take active part over time in social, economic and political life. **Intergenerational equity is therefore a principle of community solidarity**, aimed at building resilient and inclusive societies, in which equity between generations is not only passive protection, but also the gradual extension of capabilities aimed at enlarging the range of opportunities for the future.

This idea is rooted in the ethical dimension of collective responsibility. This imposes a temporal extension of the traditional principles of equity: justice over time and not just in the social space. In this context "future generations" means the individuals who have not yet been born when collective decisions are taken, but who will experience their effects in the medium and long term, in terms of opportunities, wellbeing and freedom of choice[13].

Intergenerational equity is a legal, economic and social principle connected to sustainable development. Public policies must assess the cumulative effects on future generations. Major contemporary transitions make a long-term vision essential, one which can include those who today have no say in decision-making processes.

The fact that future generations have no direct representation makes it necessary to establish institutional safeguards that can guarantee the principle of intergenerational justice, through laws, decision-making processes and control mechanisms oriented at the future.

The Rawlsian approach of "just savings" is one of the most significant contributions to contemporary reflections on intergenerational equity. In the framework set out by Rawls in A Theory of Justice (1971), **it is stated that every generation has the moral duty to transmit to future generations a set of institutions, resources and social opportunities such as to guarantee the stability and equity of the structure underpinning society in the long term**. This implies not only the

13 Current young generations are not considered future generations in a strict sense but act as empirical proxies for analysis of the intertemporal effects of policies.

conservation of existing resources, but taking on a positive obligation aimed at ensuring the continuity of just institutions and at preserving the capability of future generations to fully exercise fundamental rights and freedoms.

In the Rawlsian theory, the principle of just savings has a dual role. On the one hand, it asks present generations to contribute to building and consolidating an institutional system to make possible the fair exercise of fundamental freedoms. On the other, it establishes that once we have reached what Rawls defines as a "just stage" of society – characterised by fair institutions and by a stable socio-economic base – the goal is not the unlimited accumulation of capital, but rather the preservation of this base so that it is not compromised over time.

In this view **intergenerational equity is not conceived as perfect material equality across generations, but as respect of a minimum criterion of justice aimed at avoiding contingent decisions reducing the future possibilities of conducting a free and fully realised life**. It follows that economic, political and social choices – including those from the private sector – must be assessed in terms of coherence with this principle: practices that transfer environmental, institutional or social costs to future generations represent, in this light, violations of the duty of just savings.

The Rawlsian principle is clearly distinguished from the utilitarian approach, which tends to discount the wellbeing of future generations through time-discounting mechanisms. Rawls refutes this view, arguing that intergenerational justice cannot be subordinate to mere criteria of aggregate efficiency, but must reflect a duty of reciprocity between morally equal generations. In this sense, the principle of just savings is a robust regulatory framework to interpret the responsibility of present generations – including private economic actors – in safeguarding the conditions that make social cooperation possible in the long term.

More specifically, on the basis of this conceptual and definitional framework, three rules can be considered essential:

- the responsibility of public decision-makers to future generations;
- the sustainable use of the common heritage (environmental, social, economic and institutional);
- the inclusion of the long-term perspective in public decision-making processes.

These three propositions can be applied in numerous policy sectors, from the environment to climate, to public and private finance, education, welfare, access to economic resources, home and work, and institutional reforms.

Intergenerational equity certainly intertwines with recognition of fundamental rights, since if such rights are universal and inviolable, they must be valid not only spatially – for everyone alive today – but also over time, for people who will be alive tomorrow. The right to a clean environment, health, education, a decent life and the right to self-determination cannot be limited to the present. The very idea of democracy, which is based on participation and protecting human dignity, expands to assume its long-term dimension. It is no coincidence that numerous contemporary Constitutions, as well as fundamental international documents (for example, the UN Agenda 2030 for sustainable development), explicitly reference the obligation to consider the impacts of individual and collective decisions on generations to come.

Nonetheless, even when policies are designed to safeguard fundamental rights over the long term, the ability to uphold intergenerational equity remains subject to constantly evolving external circumstances and to strategic and existential risks. For example, the "Planetary Boundaries" framework provides an understanding and the most solid evidence for some of these risks.

Likewise, demographic changes, emerging technologies and geopolitical choices cause significant concern not only for a population's immediate situation, but also in the long term, even if most of these risks cannot be accurately modelled. **For this very reason experts have proposed drawing up "Future Risk Matrices" (FRM)**, such as those developed by the European Environment Agency (EEA), the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission (JRC) and by the Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), institutions which since 2020 have been collaborating on preparing an annual report (the Strategic Foresight Report) which identifies the risks (and the opportunities) from various phenomena, including the planetary

crisis, technological development and social, economic and geopolitical trends[14].

The broad concept of intergenerational equity gives rise to that also of "generational justice", as a guiding criterion for public action. Talking of generational justice means recognising that the current generations are not the absolute owners of the resources and socioeconomic conditions that they inherit, but temporary custodians who have specific duties in regard to those who come after. This perspective goes beyond a mere material division of goods and duties between different socioeconomic groups and embraces a model of shared responsibility for the current generation, by which collective choices must guarantee continuity over time of the fundamental rights and opportunities of human development.

Generational justice requires avoiding the creation of unsustainable environmental, social or economic debts that would burden future generations still to be born. At the same time, it requires a proactive and generative approach: consolidating in the present the bases to guarantee future generations a context characterised by dignity, freedom and equity. So it is not enough to preserve the common heritage that exists at one particular moment in time, but it is necessary to enhance it, expanding the natural, human, social, economic and institutional capital that will be left by way of inheritance to those who come after. In this way, protecting the future is not a brake on progress, but rather becomes one of its essential premises.

Traditionally, intergenerational equity has been interpreted in a defensive sense: avoiding present action producing irreversible damage on future generations. This approach has been expressed above all in environmental law, through principles such as precaution, prevention and liability. In practice, it aims to prevent the excessive exploitation of natural resources, the compromising of ecosystems, the accumulation of unsustainable public debt or the creation of social conditions that cause permanent disadvantages.

This perspective is crucial and must underpin any responsible policy. However, it is not enough to stop at preventing the damage: that is why **an advanced conception of equity between generations requires a proactive and transformative approach,** focussing on education, research, innovation, social cohesion, culture, sustainable infrastructure and the quality of institutions. It implies the creation of balanced welfare systems, circular and inclusive economic models, climate and housing policies focused on the long term, as well as management of technology that protects people without obstructing progress.

Intergenerational equity and generational justice therefore represent a new social pact that is extended through time. Protecting the future becomes an essential component of democracy, not a limit to the independence of present generations, but a guarantee of freedom and dignity for present and also future generations. In an interdependent and fragile world, the future is not an abstract horizon: it is the place where coherence between constitutional principles, fundamental rights and collective responsibility is measured. Building policies focused on the long term does not therefore mean giving up on present wellbeing, but taking on the responsibility of making it sustainable, inclusive and shared, so that progress is not ephemeral but long-lasting.

An important contribution to defining the legal framework of the rights of future generations comes from the adoption, in February 2023, of the Maastricht Principles on the Human Rights of Future Generations[15], drawn up by over 200 international experts on human rights and environmental and constitutional law. The document states that the protection of unborn generations is not something outside the remit of current international law, since numerous sources, from UN Conventions to the general principles of law, up to national constitutions and the traditions of indigenous peoples, already recognise obligations to the future[16].

The document also clarifies that **States have legally binding obligations to consider the impact of their actions on future generations and to abstain from conduct that may compromise their fundamental rights**. It also offers an evolutionary reading of existing standards, by reinterpreting fundamental rights such as those to life, health, a clean environment and culture in an intertemporal perspective: such rights must be guaranteed not only to people today, but also to those who will follow. In this way, the Principles help extend the scope of human rights to the future, strengthening the regulatory base for policies and institutions oriented to intergenerational justice.

14 European Commission (2025a), commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/strategic-foresight/2025-strategic-foresight-report_en

15 www.rightsoffuturegenerations.org.

16 www.rightsoffuturegenerations.org/the-principles/english

The educational aspect of intergenerational equity

"Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." (attributed to W. B. Yeats)

Education is an essential component of the principle of intergenerational equity since access to knowledge, training and skills determines the quality of our present life and the possibility to shape the future of individuals and the societies to which they belong. Education and learning are not only individual instruments of social mobility, but common goods which power a country's human, social and cultural capital. Their uneven distribution across territories, social classes and generations produces deep inequalities that are hard to correct over time.

For this reason, educational poverty is one of the most subtle and persistent forms of intergenerational injustice, since it is a state of deprivation which is seen when children, adolescents or adults do not have access to adequate development opportunities, both in terms of formal education and of cultural and social experiences which facilitate skills development. Educational poverty is not limited to not attending school and to insufficient learning, but includes the lack of cognitive, emotional and relational stimuli that enable full participation in community and work.

The data available for Italy are very worrying: for example, just 35.2% of children aged 0 to 2 use early childhood education and care services; in the third year of lower middle school 41.4% of pupils do not achieve an adequate level of proficiency in Italian and 44.3% do not achieve an adequate level in mathematics; 40% of young people aged 16 to 24 do not have basic digital know-how; over 60% of NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training) have low levels of educational attainment. These data describe a complex reality and show that educational poverty is not only the result of economic poverty, but also of environmental poverty, lack of social capital and cultural and digital infrastructure.

Educational poverty is a phenomenon which hits across generations and which tends to reproduce over time, generating vicious circles that are hard to break. When educational opportunities are uneven, also the transmission of resources between generations becomes unfair: while households with greater cultural and educational capital can offer their children an environment which is richer in stimuli, instruments and relationships, those born into disadvantaged contexts often find themselves bereft of occasions to valorise their potential.

This mechanism of "educational inheritance" is one of the main channels through which social inequalities are transmitted. If left unaddressed, educational poverty becomes a structural form of intergenerational injustice since it denies children and young people today the chance to enjoy the same opportunities as previous generations. It means risking living in a world in which the starting point for each generation is lower — in terms of knowledge, health, freedom and ability to choose — compared to those that preceded it, after taking the different contexts into account: for example, for a generation from the 20th century, the opportunity was to access compulsory education, while for today's generation it is to possess digital and linguistic skills to move around the globalised world.

In short, each generation should have the possibility to address the challenges of their time with adequate instruments that are comparable in terms of the potential for emancipation compared to those of previous generations. In the era of the green transition, digital skills are an essential element of education. Being able to use technology effectively and critically is not just a question of efficiency or modernity, but of citizenship. Digital exclusion in fact produces a new form of educational poverty, which is seen in the difficulty in accessing information, digitalised public services, work and continuous learning opportunities. According to European data (DESI 2024), around one European citizen in three does not have basic digital skills. In Italy the percentage rises to 45%, with sharp local and generational differences.

Southern Italy, rural areas and the most fragile socioeconomic situations have markedly lower levels of digital knowhow. This inequality risks exacerbating the preexisting divergences between north and south, between urban and peripheral areas, between young and old generations. To guarantee intergenerational equity, it is necessary to include the digital dimension in basic educational programmes and in lifelong learning policies. Digital education is not a luxury, but a condition for enjoying independence, democratic participation and active citizenship.

Combatting educational poverty and promoting intergenerational equity means recognising that education is a common good and a shared responsibility. Policies must intervene in a number of areas:

- universal and free access to quality education from early childhood;
- investment in the educational and digital infrastructure of disadvantaged areas;
- support for households in creating environments that encourage learning;
- continuous training for teachers and adults, to avoid their knowhow becoming obsolete;
- coordination between schools, local communities and the non-profit sector, to broaden training experiences beyond the school environment.

Coordination between schools, local communities and the non-profit sector is important also for the production of new statistical data, on a participatory basis, to bring out the opinions of young people and their parents, thus producing citizen data to go alongside the official statistics.

Investing in education means investing in the sustainability of the future. The United Nations, through the Agenda 2030 (Goal 4), recognises quality education as a factor that cuts across all the other sustainable development goals. Without widespread skills, no transition – green, technological, demographic – can really be fair. Education makes it possible to acquire the cognitive and social instruments needed to understand and govern change. It is therefore an intangible infrastructure for sustainability. In this sense, the educational aspect of intergenerational equity does not concern only schools and professional training, but the whole ecosystem of lifelong learning, which accompanies individuals throughout their lives.

In conclusion, justice across generations cannot be guaranteed if part of the population grows up without the educational and digital resources essential to fully exercise citizenship. Intergenerational equity is built through an educational pact that recognises in traditional and digital education the key to accessing freedom, dignity and participation.

The UN Pact for the Future and the Declaration on future generations

With the approval, in September 2015, of Agenda 2030 for sustainable development by the UN General Assembly[17], the concept of intergenerational justice came to underpin the commitments to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the end of this decade. In fact, as indicated in 1987 by the Brundtland Commission[18], sustainable development enables the present generation to meet its needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs.

Also thanks to the adoption of Agenda 2030, in recent years the attention of international institutions has turned to the rights of future generations and there has been agreement on the need to create legal and institutional instruments to protect such rights. In particular, in the 2021 report Our Common Agenda[19], the Secretary-General of the United Nations proposed a renewed vision to enhance intergenerational solidarity globally, emphasising the urgency to systematically consider the effects of today's decisions on the generations to come. On the basis of this proposal, in 2023 the United Nations published the Policy Brief "To Think and Act for Future Generations", which set out a series of proposals that were subsequently incorporated into **the Pact for the Future, the concluding document of the Summit of the Future convened in September 2024**. The Pact[20], adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2024, represents a further attempt by the United Nations to address major global challenges and advance sustainable development across all areas, despite the serious and growing operational difficulties of multilateral international bodies.

The Pact, which sets out 56 actions to be implemented over the coming years, was the result of a long process aimed at adapting international cooperation to current and future challenges and, according to the UN, is one of the most wide-ranging international agreements of recent years, covering new areas and addressing issues that have remained unresolved for decades, including reform of the UN itself and its various bodies, starting with the Security Council. **Among the main measures in the Pact is the adoption of the Declaration on future generations**[21], aimed at consolidating the collective commitment of States to safeguard the rights and interests of generations to come.

The UN Pact for the Future and the Declaration on future generations provide guiding principles for integrating a long-term perspective into public decision-making and to move from an ethical to a political-institutional approach, strengthening the responsibility of States towards future generations.

The Declaration defines some essential guiding principles (see the dedicated panel), including **the duty to assess the long-term impact of every policy on the basis of the criteria of intergenerational equity and sustainability**, which should orient both global governance and national policies, facilitating the structural inclusion of the perspective of future generations in decision-making processes. The Declaration also envisages **concrete commitments to consider the needs of young people and of future generations in decision-making processes**. In particular, the Declaration sets out eight actions to which UN Member States, including Italy, have committed and which were agreed acknowledging "the primary role and responsibility of governments at all levels, in line with their respective constitutional frameworks, towards safeguarding the needs and interests of future generations":

1. leveraging science, data, statistics and strategic foresight **to ensure long-term thinking and planning**, and to develop and implement sustainable practices and the institutional re-

17 United Nations (2015), www.un.org/ohrlls/sites/www.un.org.ohrlls/files/2030_agenda_for_sustainable_development_web.pdf

18 United Nations (1987), www.brundtland.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Brundtland-Report-1987-Our-Common-Future.pdf

19 United Nations (2023). This is one of the UN policy briefs drawn up in preparation of the Summit of the Future in 2024; www.un.org/en/common-agenda/policy-briefs

20 United Nations General Assembly (2024), www.un.org/en/summit-of-the-future/declaration-on-future-generations.

21 United Nations General Assembly (2024), www.un.org/en/summit-of-the-future/declaration-on-future-generations.

forms necessary to ensure evidence-based decision making, while making governance more anticipatory, adaptive and responsive to future opportunities, risks and challenges;

2. **ensuring inclusive and equitable access to knowledge, science and information**, while promoting innovation, critical thinking and life skills to create generations of citizens that are agents of positive change and transformation;

3. **strengthening our systems of national and global accounting**, including by promoting the use of forward-looking, evidence-based impact assessments, developing stronger anticipatory risk analyses and encouraging the use of measures of progress on sustainable development that complement and go beyond gross domestic product;

4. **investing in capacity to better prepare for and respond to future global shocks, crises and challenges**, and using evidence-based planning and foresight to avoid and mitigate risks, while ensuring that the poorest and most vulnerable do not bear disproportionate costs and burdens of mitigation, adaptation, restoration and resilience-building;

5. **undertaking a whole-of-government approach to coordination**, including at the national and local levels, on the assessment, development, implementation and evaluation of policies that safeguard the needs and interests of future generations;

6. **enhancing cooperation with stakeholders**, including civil society, academia, the scientific and technological community and the private sector, and **encouraging intergenerational partnerships**, by promoting a whole-of-society approach, to share best practices and develop innovative, long-term and forward-thinking ideas in order to safeguard the needs and interests of future generations;

7. equipping the multilateral system, including the United Nations, to support States, upon their request, in their efforts to implement this Declaration and **embed the needs and interests of future generations and long-term thinking in policymaking processes** by fostering cooperation and facilitating greater use of anticipatory planning and foresight, based on science, data and statistics, and raising awareness of and advising on the likely intergenerational or future impacts of policies and programmes;

8. **fostering an organisational culture that is future-oriented and mainstreamed** across the United Nations system in order to facilitate science- and evidence-based decision-making by developing diverse capabilities, including anticipatory planning, foresight and futures literacy, and systematically promoting long-term and intergenerational thinking at all levels.

The Declaration also refers to the Secretary-General's proposal to appoint a "Special Envoy for Future generations" to support the implementation of the Declaration, and Member States commit to convening a high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly on future generations that will review the implementation of this Declaration and provide updates on the actions taken to safeguard the needs and interests of future generations. Finally, the Secretary-General is asked to present a report on implementation of the Declaration.

A further instrument proposed within the framework of the Pact for the Future is **the creation of an "Intergovernmental Forum on Future generations"**, a permanent platform, under the aegis of the General Assembly, dedicated to the exchange of experiences and monitoring the commitments made by States. This Forum should enable the sharing of good practices and the alignment of national and international policies in regard to the principles established by the Declaration, at the same time promoting significant participation by young people and civil society in global decision-making processes.

The declaration on future generations: the guiding principles

In order to seize the opportunity that present generations possess to leave a better future for generations to come and to fulfil our commitment to meet the demands of the present in a way that safeguards the needs and interests of future generations, while leaving no one behind, we will observe the following guiding principles:

1. the maintenance of international peace and security, and the full respect for international law, must be promoted in line with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations;

2. the pursuit and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, encompassing civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, which includes the right to development, must be respected, protected and promoted, without distinction or discrimination of any kind;

3. the opportunity for future generations to thrive in prosperity and achieve sustainable development must be ensured, including by eliminating the intergenerational transmission of poverty and hunger, inequality and injustice, and acknowledging the special challenges faced by the most vulnerable countries, in particular African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States;

4. the promotion of intergenerational solidarity, as well as intergenerational dialogue, and social cohesion is an indispensable part of the foundation for the prosperity of future generations and, in this regard, the role of households and family-friendly and family-oriented policies as contributors to sustainable development must be recognized;

5. a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, where humanity lives in harmony with nature, must be created and maintained by urgently addressing the causes and adverse impacts of climate change and scaling up collective action to promote environmental protection;

6. the promotion of the responsible and ethical use of science, technology and innovation, guided by the principles of equity and solidarity, is necessary to foster an open, fair and inclusive environment for scientific and technological development and digital cooperation while bridging the scientific, technological and innovation divides, including digital divides, within and between countries;

7. the achievement of gender equality, the empowerment of all women and girls and the full enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination of any kind are necessary requirements for a sustainable future;

8. the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities of present and future generations in society, including the opportunity for them to be actively involved in decision-making processes, is critical to ensuring that no one is left behind;

9. the elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, as well as the achievement of racial equality and the empowerment of all people, are required for a prosperous and sustainable future;

10. an inclusive, transparent and effective multilateral system is essential to enhance international solidarity and cooperation, rebuild trust and create a world that is safe, just and sustainable, where human dignity is ensured.

The inclusion of the principle of intergenerational equity in European policies

A first attempt to integrate the principle of intergenerational justice into the decision-making processes of the European Union dates back to 2021[22], with the revision of the "Better Regulation" framework, through which the European Commission aims to improve the effectiveness, coherence and quality of its policies and regulations. This framework is based on two main components:

- the Guidelines, which guide policymakers in developing and implementing policies – from defining the problem to ex ante impact assessment, to public consultation to monitoring and ex post assessment – guaranteeing methodological rigour and coherence;
- the Toolbox, an operational manual which integrates the Guidelines with practical instruments, analytical models and standard methodologies to assess policies in economic, social and environmental terms.

With the 2021 update, **the Commission announced the intention to include in this framework a Youth Test** (or Youth Check). The goal is to guarantee that every EU legislative or policy proposal is also assessed in terms of its impact on young people, identifying any negative impacts and mitigation measures, and so promoting an approach of intergenerational equity in the European decision-making process. This approach is applied across all policy areas to all sectors, not only to youth policies, but also to environmental, economic, digital, infrastructure or social policies.

In adopting this principle, the Commission was inspired by the work undertaken previously by the OECD which as early as 2018[23], in a document dedicated to the empowerment of new generations, had recommended the introduction of intergenerational impact assessment tools for policies (Youth Check). According to the OECD, these tools help align policy outcomes with the concerns of younger generations and to anticipate possible negative implications, thus reducing the risk of negative effects dragging on over time.

In 2022, the OECD adopted a Recommendation calling on its members to promote better opportunities for young people and to apply common standards across the relevant policy areas relevant for the new generations[24]. **The Youth Policy Toolkit is an instrument developed by the OECD to support those responsible for public policies, youth organisations and civil society representatives in designing, implementing and assessing policies that respond to the needs of young people**, taking account of the social, economic and cultural characteristics of the various national and local contexts[25]. The Toolkit provides a methodological approach based on data and comparative analyses, with over 70 examples of good practices from the various OECD countries which cover: education and training, employment and entrepreneurship, health and social inclusion, participation and representation in public life, public governance and intergenerational justice.

The European Union has already chosen to assess the impact of policies on various aspects of sustainable development, with particular attention to young people. This approach is applied in a crosscutting way to all sectors, not just to youth policies.

Also in 2022, **the European Youth Forum, the platform which represents European youth organisations, launched the EU Youth Test[26], aimed at guaranteeing that the policies and laws of the European Union systematically take account of their impact on young people**. The instrument aims to secure systematic consideration of the effects of policies and laws on young people, even when they are not the direct beneficiaries, for example in the case of macroeconom-

22 European Commission (2021, 2023).
23 OECD (2018).
24 OECD (2022).
25 OECD (2024).
26 European Youth Forum. EU Youth Test www.youthforum.org/topics/eu-youth-test.

ic, infrastructure or environmental policies. It is broken down into five key pillars:

- assessment of the relevance of the legislative proposal for young people;
- significant involvement of youth organisations in formulating proposals;
- analysis of the generational impacts of the proposals themselves;
- adoption of mitigation measures to avoid possible negative effects, with particular attention to young people in vulnerable situations;
- transparency in publishing the results, also by using language that is accessible to young people.

A decisive boost to the institutionalisation of the Youth Test at European level came from the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), which in 2022-2023 drew up two opinions: the own-initiative opinion "EU impact assessment from the viewpoint of young people"[27] and an opinion at the request of the Spanish presidency of the Council[28]. In both opinions **the EESC underlines the need to structurally involve young people throughout the policy cycle** (from definition to assessment), with transparent mechanisms to monitor and communicate the results. The EESC then invites European institutions and member states to **systematically integrate the perspective of the new generations in all public intervention sectors**, creating space for participation that enables young people to contribute with their knowhow and experience also in areas not traditionally classified as "youth policies". These structures must be equipped with adequate resources and assessment mechanisms, and be complementary to the existing instruments for participation, without replacing them or reducing the funds allocated to them.

From the operational and legal viewpoint, **the EESC proposes that the Youth Test be formally included in the Better Regulation framework**, as an autonomous instrument, in the same way as other sectoral "tests" that are already recognised (for example, the SME Test for small and medium-sized enterprises). To make this instrument more influential the Committee recommends that "With a view to breaking down economic barriers, the EU and the Member States should give priority to both integrating young people into the labour market through quality jobs and improving outreach to NEET (not in employment, education or training)".

The opinions of the EESC also recall the importance of building on experience and good practice already developed at national and local level, such as those in Austria, Germany, France and Flanders, and to integrate the future European Youth Test with existing initiatives such as the EU Dialogue with Young People or the event "Your Europe, Your Say!". In this light, **in 2024 the EESC launched a Youth Test pilot project applied to its Opinions**, involving a network of over 70 European youth organisations and introducing the direct participation of representatives of younger generations in consultative processes, with the goal of assessing the generational impact of the recommendation of the Committee itself.

In 2024, the European Commission published the Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the European Year of Youth 2022, with the goal of consolidating the results achieved during that year and of transforming them into a structural and long-lasting legacy. The Communication recognises that the European Year of Youth represented an important opportunity to focus the Union's political agenda on the perspective of the new generations, but underlines the need to make this focus systematic and permanent in the preparation of European policies. To this end, the Commission proposed a series of concrete actions aimed at institutionalising the impact assessment of EU policies on young generations and at enhancing their role in the decision-making processes.

Among the measures announced are the introduction of a Youth Check within the Commission's legislative and planning initiatives, more systematic integration of the youth and intergenerational dimension in the Better Regulation framework and toolbox, and the creation of stable participatory platforms and channels in order to guarantee a significant involvement by young people in the various stages of the policy cycle. In addition, the Communication identifies some priority action areas on which to build an operational follow-up to the European Year of Youth: civic and democratic participation, employment and social inclusion, mental health and the wellbeing

27 European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), "EU Impact Assessment from the viewpoint of young people", SOC/728, Brussels, 24 February 2022.

28 European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), "Cooperation on youth", SOC/759, Brussels 15 June 2023.

of young people, and mobility for learning and intercultural exchange. In each of these areas, the Commission undertakes to promote intersectoral initiatives which facilitate the active participation of young people and the reduction of generational inequalities[29].

In September 2025 the EESC approved the opinion "Evaluating the impact of public policies in the medium and long term through intergenerational budgeting"[30], which insists on the need to focus as a priority on the economic assessment of the impact on young people, inviting the member states to systematically consider the intergenerational dimension in their budgets. In particular, **the EESC proposes to apply the Youth Check to all the items of relevant national public budgets, clearly identifying the "generational" or "potentially generational" measures**. According to the EESC, this instrument would help better align public spending to the principles of intergenerational equity, at the same time promoting a generational exchange between young people and older people. This approach should also promote the joint participation of young people, especially for the purposes of identifying potentially generational measures.

29 European Commission, "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the European Year of Youth 2022", COM (2024) 1 final.

30 European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), "Evaluating the impact of public policies in medium and long term through the intergenerational budgeting", SOC/827, Brussels, 18 September 2025.

Experiences of assessing the impact of policies on young people and future generations in some European countries

In recent years various European countries – including Austria, Germany, France, Belgium, Portugal and Finland[31] – have introduced instruments dedicated to assessing the impact of laws in regard to the principle of intergenerational justice, which are often configured as Youth Tests in order to analyse the impact of policies on the new generations[32]. **Generational Impact Assessment (GIA) is a tool for applying a youth perspective**, which is based on real participation by young people in governance processes right up to effective co-planning. The GIA, therefore, with its scoring system and sets of indicators, cannot be the endpoint, but rather the starting-point for subsequent co-planning of interventions and monitoring of their impact. This general goal is joined by the specific one of being able, on the one hand, to consolidate, at national level, the culture of assessment within the decision-making process, facilitating the implementation of mitigation measures aimed at correcting any imbalances or inefficiencies in the actions planned; on the other, to estimate the effect that each intervention may produce on the new generations, involving young people as partners in the advocacy process.

The assessment can take place at different stages of the policy cycle before its launch (ex ante), during implementation (ongoing assessment) or at its end (ex post). For example, in the assessment of the impacts of policies on achievement of the SDGs, there are various instruments and methods – quantitative and qualitative – used to measure the distance from (ex ante in the design of policies) and the path toward (in itinere and ex post, in the realisation of the interventions) the preset goals and targets[33]. Achieving the SDGs requires the definition of systems to coordinate policies, at national and local level, in order to design and implement coherent and integrated policy measures, setting out objectives, indicators and processes for their assessment and monitoring so as to take into account potential trade-offs and synergies.

Let us now briefly review the features of the experiences in the various European countries.

Austria

Since 2013 Austria[34] has applied the Jugend-Check, which assesses legislative and regulatory proposals in order to verify their effects on children and people aged under 30, also thanks to the opinion of the Bundesjugendvertretung (BJV) (equivalent to the Italian Consiglio Nazionale Giovani). The aim of the initiative is to promote the wellbeing of the new generations and avoid unintended negative impacts from the laws.

Existing experience demonstrates both the feasibility and usefulness of generational impact assessments. These assessments are not an end in themselves, but a tool for the collaborative design of interventions and the monitoring of their impacts.

The proposed laws are examined in regard to three areas: protection of health, development and training; economic and social support for younger generations; security of future prospects. The Youth Check is part of the Regulatory Impact Assessment: each ministry fills in a form with a section on young people and, if relevant, undertakes a detailed analysis of the effects on the new generations (excluding measures with a financial impact of less than EUR 1 million), consulting experts and organisations. The policies assessed are verified within five years, comparing the *ex post* results with *ex ante* forecasts and actual data in order to ensure transparency.

It is a very interesting approach, albeit not without its problems: the quality of the analyses depends on the awareness and expertise of the individual

31 For an organic and comparative analysis, see LUISS Policy Observatory (2025).

32 European Commission, EACEA , Youth Wiki (2024).

33 LUISS Policy Observatory (2025).

34 www.bundeskanzleramt.gv.at/en/agenda/youth/austrian-youth-strategy/youth-participation.html#:~:text=On%201%20January%202013%20the,involved%20in%20the%20legislative%20process; https://www.parlament.gv.at/PERK/JUGEND/JUGENDCHECK/ ; European Youth Forum (2024).

ministries, while the economic filter may exclude measures that are formally neutral, but with social impacts on young people, thus disregarding the assessment of more subtle intergenerational implications.

Germany

In Germany[35] the *Jugend-Check* was introduced in 2017 to make legislation more focused on younger generations. Unlike the Austrian model, it is managed by an independent body – the *Kompetenzzentrum Jugend-Check* (ComJC) – which is tasked with systematically analysing proposed federal legislation to assess their impact on young people aged 12 to 27. The aim is to highlight their needs in the legislative process and provide objective analyses on the effects, including unintended ones, of the laws.

The ComJC assesses proposed laws ex ante (as received from the ministries or indicated by the Federal Ministry for Youth) in order to identify their relevance for younger generations and, if pertinent, conducts an in-depth analysis on 11 aspects in six life areas (family, leisure, education and employment, health and the environment, participation, and the digital sphere) based on data and consultation. The monitoring is carried out by the ComJC in the ministerial phase, with the possible involvement of experts and youth representatives.

Between 2017 and 2024 more than 500 proposals underwent ex ante assessment, with hundreds of impact reports produced. Nonetheless, this model too has some limits: young people are not directly involved in the decision-making process, the assessment is not obligatory by law or binding for the Government, and the ComJC operates with limited resources.

France

In France[36] the *Clause d'impact jeunesse* has been in force since 2016, introduced to assess ex ante the impact of every new law or regulation on young people aged 16 to 25. The analysis considers three aspects: absence of discriminatory provisions based on age; differences in impact between young people and adults, together with any corresponding compensatory measures; the contribution of the proposed measure to young people's autonomy.

Each ministry must include in the *fiche d'impact* of each proposal a section dedicated to young people. If the assessment is not done or is insufficient, the Prime Minister's Office can request additions or involve the *Direction de la Jeunesse, de l'Éducation Populaire et de la Vie Associative*. The reports are published on *jeunes.gouv.fr* and *Legifrance*. A Council to direct youth policies (COJ) has also been set up and tasked to prepare an annual report on the implementation of the clause and on youth policies in general. However, the number of youth tests effectively carried out has remained low as the clause is not legally binding and its application depends on the political will and commitment of the individual administrations.

Belgium (Flanders)

In Belgium[37] there is no federal Youth Check, but the Flemish region has, since 2008, applied the *JoKER* (*Jeugd–Kind–Effect–Rapport*), which assesses every proposed regional law for its effects on children and young people to the age of 25. The instrument combines youth mainstreaming and protecting childhood rights, in line with the UN Convention of the rights of the child.

The *JoKER* requires a qualitative report for every proposed law based on five questions on rights, benefits/disadvantages and possible alternatives that are more favourable to younger generations, with concrete examples and descriptive conclusions. The youth division of the Department of Culture, Youth and Media can review the reports, while the relevant Authority and the Youth Council of Flanders (*Vlaamse Jeugdraad*) can contribute, but no direct consultation of young people is envisaged. The JoKER is a well-established practice that has increased institutional sensitivity to youth rights, albeit with limits linked to the qualitative and sometimes subjective nature of the results.

Spain

In Spain the Institute of Youth (INJUVE) produces an annual report which details the measures taken to support young people. The report assesses ex post every action plan using precise assessment indicators to promote the development of new measures aimed at young people. On the basis of the document, the Interministerial Commission for Youth decides on the introduction of new initiatives to be adopted.

35 www.jugend-check.de; European Youth Forum (2024).

36 www.ecologie.gouv.fr/politiques-publiques/politique-de-la-ville?creation-d-une-clause-d-impact=; European Youth Forum (2024); www.jeunes.gouv.fr/media/1087/download

37 www.vlaanderen.be/cjm/nl/jeugd/vlaams-jeugd-en-kinderrechtenbeleid/instrumenten/joker-kind-en-jongereneffectrapport

Portugal
In Portugal the creation and implementation of policy instruments and strategic documents for youth development are preceded by sample surveys conducted nationwide. In particular, the definition of the strategic areas of the National Plan for Youth was the result of vast participation and consultation with young people and their representatives (such as youth organisations, association leaders, experts in youth policies, universities and municipalities).

The Permanent Observatory of Youth (OPJ), a body of the University of Lisbon, is one of the institutions that is a partner in this process and it produces publications and has developed a database with the goal of monitoring public policies, programmes and actions taken in favour of young people.

Finland
In Finland the National Council of Youth, together with the Finnish Society of Research on Youth, prepares surveys and indicators to orient youth policies. Data on growth and life conditions of young people are collected by local intersectoral coordination bodies and used to assess the youth situation and support the planning of policies, also at local level. Finally, it publishes surveys and studies that can define youth policies.

Information on the growth and on the life conditions of young people is collected by a coordination body for intersectoral cooperation at local level set up by the local government. On the basis of these data, the situation of young people is assessed to support and influence policies and planning, also at local level.

How to assess public policies from the viewpoint of intergenerational equity: the European Commission's proposals

As part of the activities undertaken in 2025 by the European Commissioner for Intergenerational equity, Glenn Micallef, aimed at defining a European strategy to guarantee full integration of the interests of present and future generations in drawing up and monitoring policies, fourteen expert groups were set up, coordinated by the Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC), addressing various thematic and crosscutting aspects linked to Intergenerational Fairness (IGF)[38]. The Commission also aims to identify new tools for analysing intergenerational fairness from the earliest stages of policy and legislative design, while at the same time strengthening existing instruments within a systemic, long-term perspective and as part of the impact assessments provided for under the Better Regulation framework[39].

The assessment of the effects of policies on future generations aims to examine how the fundamental rights of tomorrow's citizens will be influenced and how a specific legislative or policy proposal may impact on their exposure to risk (for example, a measure which strengthens the resilience of water networks) or on their ability to adapt[40]. To this end long-term systemic risks must be mapped (for example, through a Future Risk Matrix which considers geopolitical, demographic, environmental, technological-digital, sociocultural risks, etc.) so as to be able to analyse ex ante the effects of the policies/legislative initiatives on such risks and the outcomes in terms of intergenerational equity. The proposed approach requires the definition of time parameters (period, time discount rates, risk thresholds) and a sensitivity analysis to make the trade-offs and intergenerational implications of the policy proposals to be adopted transparent[41].

The European Union has developed a range of instruments and methodologies to assess the generational impact of policies. the forthcoming Strategy on Intergenerational Fairness aims to enhance this perspective also for member states.

Strengthening the link between impact assessment, participatory foresight methods and quantitative analysis instruments is essential in order to guarantee that the design of long-term policies is inclusive, evidence-based and forward-looking, and supported by shared data and scenarios. This requires a more strategic use of existing impact assessment instruments, such as Social Multi-Criteria Evaluation (see, for example, SOCRATES developed by the JRC)[42], simulation models, sensitivity analyses and deliberative participation instruments, in order to integrate quantitative and qualitative data into the scope of the various long-term scenarios[43]. In addition, it is important to assess the distribution of equity between generations in order to determine which specific age groups or cohorts would be more advantaged or penalised by each policy option.

IEffective policy monitoring, an essential component of Better Regulation, requires adequate data collection and a system of relevant indicators for assessing the intergenerational implications of policy measures.

The European Commission therefore proposes to strengthen the Better Regulation guidelines

38 policy-lab.ec.europa.eu/news/paving-way-strategy-intergenerational-fairness-2025-02-25_en

39 The Better Regulation guidelines require impact assessment for the Commission's initiatives (legislative proposals, financial programmes, etc.) which may have a significant economic, social or environmental impact. commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/impact-assessments_en.

40 European Commission (2025b), Design the future for Intergenerational Fairness, A blueprint with policy insights & ideas compiled during the ideation phase in support of the design of the strategy on intergenerational fairness.

41 European Commission (2025b).

42 knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/smce_en.

43 In this direction, the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission is collaborating with the Beyond Lab of the United Nations in order to methodologically improve the Futures Balance instrument, a decision-making aid based on Artificial Intelligence which enables public decision-makers to analyse long-term and intersectoral effects of policies, with particular attention to intergenerational equity. The goal is to strengthen, on the methodological level, the connection between the Futures Balance instrument of the United Nations and the instrument SOCRATES, developed by the European Commission for the ex ante assessment of policies, in order to enhance the capacity of public decision-makers to consider the long-term effects of policy choices in terms of intergenerational equity.

and the related Toolbox[44], introducing explicit intergenerational equity criteria along the various phases of the assessment cycle. The complex challenges that societies must face today require the contribution of numerous players called on to collectively assess risks, to align their actions and monitor their outcome. In all the documents drawn up so far it is therefore stressed that greater participation by citizens, experts, and stakeholders would help improve the quality of the design of policies, to the benefit of both present and future generations. The ultimate goal is a democracy which is not simply representative and reactive, but which knows how to be forward-looking and participatory. A democracy that can look to the future and build the skills necessary to give shape to tomorrow, including also those who today still do not have a say.

An example of an Intergenerational Fairness Policy Assessment Toolkit

The School of International Futures (SOIF) and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation have developed a methodology for the intergenerational assessment of policies, which has already been successfully tried out by independent institutions in Portugal (for example, by the Bank of Portugal on the reform of pensions) and on proposed laws being discussed in the British Parliament by volunteers coordinated by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Future Generations. The Toolkit is designed to be able to be adapted to numerous contexts and to be used by national and local governments, international organisations, foundations, businesses and interest groups that wish to guarantee that decisions taken today are right for present and future generations.

The instrument can be applied to any type of action or strategic decision, both *ex ante* and *ex post*, and assesses whether a specific policy measure is fair from the intergenerational viewpoint by replying to five key questions: does the measure disadvantage people in particular life stages? Does it disadvantage people in a particular period of time, present or future? Does the policy intervention increase the likelihood that inequalities will persist over time? Does it restrict the choices available to future generations? Does it move society further away from its vision of the future?

The instrument envisages five stages. The first ("diagnostic") is carried out in order to understand the intended and unintended effects of the policy intervention over time. In this stage:

- it starts with collecting information on the policy, its aims, timeframes, population groups and areas involved, and on the context (international legal or regulatory restrictions, unaddressed aspects of the problem, historical injustices, alternative policies);
- the short, medium and long term are defined on the basis of the nature of the intervention and its timeframe, tracing out a timeline of the possible implications over the various time horizons and identifying those which require further analysis;
- the "counterfactual" is analysed to compare the impacts of the policy: impacts on the environment and people, transmission of inequalities, life stages, public finance, future policy options and other relevant impacts which respond to the five key questions on intergenerational equity.

In the second stage, "recommendations" are formulated, i.e. changes or actions to address any aspects of intergenerational injustice identified, to determine whether further analysis is necessary and decide the next steps to communicate the results or to complete or refine the assessment. This stage is fundamental in order to identify further necessary areas for analysis and to determine

44 commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/better-regulation/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox_en. *European Commission (2021, 2023).*

whether the policy is “clearly fair”, “clearly unfair” or “requires further analysis”. In the latter case it moves on to the next stage, the assessment of the expected impacts, using the qualitative and quantitative data available, models drawn up by experts and participatory sessions to explore the chains of intentional and unintended impacts on generations over time.

The participatory approach is essential since it helps gather opinions and insights from citizens regarding the policies to be assessed. These methods, such as in-person or online workshops, surveys and interviews, make it possible to explore the impacts of policies from various perspectives, i.e. they guarantee that the assessment of policies is inclusive, covers different perspectives, and is rooted in the needs and visions of citizens who can also suggest possible quantitative indicators to be monitored. It is also important to use peer review, with an independent assessment by an external reviewer, to verify the correctness of the process and the validity of the conclusions, so as to ensure the solidity and trustworthiness of the assessment.

The third stage puts the assessment developed in the first two stages to stress testing regarding various alternative future scenarios, formulating recommendations to guarantee the effectiveness and robustness of the policy in a context of uncertainty. The fourth stage examines how the policy has been designed and implemented, whether intergenerational themes have been integrated, whether various perspectives have been sought, and whether the process itself has generated unfairness.

Finally, the results and recommendations are summarised. The communication of the results of the assessment of policies is essential to guarantee transparency, accountability and to stimulate public debate on intergenerational equity. For this reason, the final report must be clear, accessible and targeted at the relevant public.

The protection of intergenerational equity in Italian law

As we have seen, for some years the main European countries have equipped themselves with instruments aimed at achieving intergenerational equity and defining policies that are more attentive to the impact on young people and on future generations. So models have been developed, as well as methodologies and instruments to assess both the potential ex ante effects of laws, regulations or programmes on present and future young generations, and the impact of existing measures, policies, and laws on young people and on future generations. More recently, **Italy too has decided to address this issue, with changes to the Constitution and the law which place Italy — at least in terms of its legal framework — at the international forefront.**

The first guidelines for a possible model to assess new laws in this perspective were published in July 2022 by the Committee for the Assessment of the Generational Impact of Public Policies (COVIGE) (COVIGE). The latter was established in July 2021[45] in the Prime Minister's Office at the prompting of the Minister of Youth Policies of the Draghi Government and with the aim of offering "an analytical and methodological contribution to support public administrations". The scope of the Guidelines includes all regulatory and administrative interventions, as defined and managed by the central government departments, which include among their beneficiaries young people aged 14 to 35, or specific groups within this age range, whether they are affected directly, exclusively or partially, potentially or indirectly. The Guidelines also set out the future goals of COVIGE as:

- the classification of the Government's policies into two categories "with generational impacts" and "with potentially generational impacts";
- the drafting of an intergenerational budget after each year's budget law in order to quantify the spending dedicated to the youth population;
- the development of its own Youth Check model[46].

The legitimacy, indeed, the obligation, of this strand of impact assessment of policies derives from the constitutional reform which modified articles 9 and 41 of the Constitution (Constitutional Law no. of 11 February 2022). In particular, the new article 9 envisages that "the Republic (...) shall protect the environment, biodiversity and ecosystems, also in the interest of future generations". The reform, which has been promoted by ASviS since 2016, approves, with a view to integral sustainability, an important paradigm shift aimed at the wellbeing and right to the future of young people and at protecting future generations[47]. In addition, the new article 41 states that private economic enterprise may not be carried out in a manner that causes harm to health or the environment and makes it possible to direct and coordinate public and private economic activity "also for environmental purposes".

With the change made in 2022 the interest of future generations became one of the fundamental principles of the Constitution. The law introducing the GIA sets out that the laws of the Republic shall promote intergenerational equity. It is a genuine revolution which imposes a new way of designing public policies.

In the so-called "Priolo" judgment (Constitutional Court Judgment No. 105/2024) of the Constitutional Court relating to the petrochemical plant at Syracuse, the constitutional change made a decisive difference to the Court's choice. It writes: "**also particular is the perspective of protection which is today indicated by the constitutional lawmakers, which not only refers to the interests of individuals and the collective in the present, but also extends to the interests**

45 COVIGE (Committee to assess the generational impact of public policies) was set up in the Prime Minister's Office with the Decree of 3 June 2021, while the Guidelines were issued with the Ministerial Decree of 8 July 2021 and subsequently integrated with the Ministerial Decrees of 6 October 2021 and 23 June 2022. See Cioffi and Pierattini (2023) and www.policiesgiovanili.gov.it/media/idvcoo3w/linee-guida-covige.pdf.

46 For an integral analysis of the arguments mentioned and the full consultation of the respective regulatory sources, see L. Monti (2022).

47 See asvis.it/archivio-notizie-alleanza/1276-11149/lo-sviluppo-sostenibile-arriva-nella-costituzione-lasvis-plaude-al-risultato.

of future generations: and therefore of people who do not yet exist, but in regard to whom current generations have a precise duty to preserve conditions so that they too can enjoy an environmental heritage that is as intact as possible, and that the various matrices of this heritage remain characterised by the richness and diversity that mark it out. Moreover, protecting the environment – in the interests again of individuals and the collective now, as well as of those who are still not born – now becomes an explicit limit on the very freedom of economic initiatives, the undertaking of which cannot 'cause harm' – not only to security, freedom, human dignity, as mentioned in the previous text of art. 41, second paragraph, Constitution – but also to health and the environment".

The full recognition of the change in paradigm of public policies in regard to the principle of intergenerational justice took place with Law no. 167/2025 (at the Government's initiative) as definitively approved by the Chamber of Deputies on 29 October 2025, setting out "Measures to simplify legislation and improve the quality of lawmaking, and delegations to the Government for simplification, regulatory consolidation and reorganisation in certain areas". In particular Generational Impact Assessment is governed by Articles 4 and 5. Paragraph 1 of article 4 of the Law envisages that **"the laws of the Republic promote intergenerational equity also in the interests of future generations"**, while paragraph 2 introduces Generational impact assessment (GIA), which "is an analytical tool consisting of an ex ante assessment of the regulatory acts of the Government, excluding decree-laws, in relation to the environmental or social effects of provisions affecting young people and future generations, with particular attention to intergenerational equity".

To guarantee that the new laws respect this principle, the following paragraph envisages that the GIA be carried out as part of the Regulatory impact analysis (RIA), in accordance with the criteria and procedures that will be identified through a Prime Ministerial Decree, adopted in agreement with the political authority holding delegated responsibility for youth policy, within 180 days of the coming into force of the law.

The principle introduced in the first paragraph is of great importance: it is a very significant affirmation that consolidates the new constitutional principle and commits future governments and parliaments to operate on the basis of the principle which underpins the very concept of sustainability. Of course, this principle may also be invoked in legal challenges, including constitutional proceedings, should some stakeholder perceive its violation, also caused by regional laws.

Some experts in the subject have noted that the formulation adopted by the law risks, in the current context, not covering most of the legal instruments, given the widespread use of decree-laws by successive Governments over the years. In reality, the law also establishes that **"the GIA is, in any case, necessary if the regulatory act determines significant environmental or social effects on young people and on future generations"**.

In order to guarantee effective implementation of article 4 and in order to monitor the real promotion of intergenerational equity, the following article 5 envisages the **establishment in the Prime Minister's Office of the National Observatory for the generational impact of laws**, with the duty of monitoring, analysing, studying and proposing possible instruments to define and implement the objectives envisaged by the law. The organisation and operation of the Observatory are arranged through a Prime Ministerial Decree to be adopted within sixty days, even if it is noted that it will operate within the limits of human, technical and financial resources available under the current law, without generating new or additional costs for the public finances.

As noted, **the change to the Constitution and the aforementioned law cause a potential "quantum leap" for our country's legal and political culture** which is tightly focused on achieving short-term goals, and provide a significant response to the provisions of the Pact for the Future. Obviously, now it is a question of effectively applying what is envisaged by the new legal framework, which requires deep reflection by both the Government and Parliament, which have the duty to guarantee application of the aforementioned principle of "promoting intergenerational equity" in the laws of the Republic.

In this regard the Enabling Bill on policies for young people and Universal Civil Service seems important, approved by the Council of Ministers on 22 December 2025. The provision intends to define overall national regulation of youth policies, promoting, moreover, the participation of young people in political, economic and social life, in compliance with the principle of intergenerational equity, actively involving them in decision-making processes and policy making. The Enabling Bill also envisages the establishment of a Permanent Observatory for policies for young people, which will have the duty of ensuring coor-

dination across the different levels of government and drawing up the National Strategy for Youth, a planning document, with a time horizon of at least five years, containing strategic priorities, objectives and actions agreed between central and local government.

Finally, it should be noted that article 6 of the law envisages a change to article 14 of Law no. 246 of 28 November 2005, envisaging that: "in order to achieve application of the principle of equality between women and men and effective parity in every aspect of public and private life, **the Regulatory Impact Analysis and the Regulatory Impact Assessment include, among the areas for investigation and assessment, the gender impact**, according to the criteria and means identified with the Prime Ministerial decrees as set out in paragraph 5". In this case too, this is an extremely important step in order to improve the quality of public policies, which the GIA too must incorporate.

Generational impact assessment according to Law no. 167/2025

Art. 4 (Generational impact assessment):

1. The laws of the Republic shall promote intergenerational equity also in the interest of future generations.

2. Generational impact assessment (GIA) is an informative instrument that consists of the preventative analysis of the regulatory acts of the Government, excluding decree-laws, in relation to the environmental or social effects caused by provisions that fall on young people and on future generations, with particular attention to intergenerational equity.

3. The GIA of the regulatory acts as set out in paragraph 2 is carried out as part of the regulatory impact analysis envisaged by article 14 of Law no. 246 of 28 November 2005, in accordance with criteria and means identified with the Prime Ministerial Decree as set out in paragraph 5 of the same article 14, adopted in agreement with the political authority with delegated responsibility for young people, within one hundred and eighty days from the date this law comes into force.

4. The GIA is, in any case, necessary if the regulatory act determines significant environmental or social effects on young people and future generations. In these cases there is no prejudice to the criteria and means identified with the decree as set out in paragraph 3.

Art. 5 (Observatory for the generational impact of laws)

1. In order to monitor the real promotion of intergenerational equity between future generations in lawmaking, pursuant to article 4, the National Observatory for the generational impact of laws is set up in the Prime Minister's Office.

2. The Observatory monitors, analyses, studies and proposes possible instruments to define and implement the objectives as set out in article 4.

3. The organisation and the operation of the Observatory are arranged with the Prime Ministerial Decree to be adopted within sixty days of this law coming into force.

4. The establishment and operation of the Observatory is arranged within the limits of human, technical and financial resources available under the law when in force, without new or higher costs for the public finances. The members of the Observatory do not receive payments, attendance fees, reimbursements of expenses or other emoluments however termed.

Experiences of intergenerational impact assessment in Italy

In recent years local authorities have been noticeably proactive, something which, although deriving from the same logic which inspires the GIA, is founded on their closeness to citizens, on direct knowledge of the needs of the local territory and on the ability to intervene promptly and in a targeted way on local public policies. Local bodies are in fact the institutional actors best placed to address the effects of intergenerational inequalities, the difficulties experienced by the current young generations and the obstacles young people face in achieving full economic independence, in the sense of the real possibility of having access to housing, employment, education, mobility, culture and welfare services.

Regions and Municipalities are the bodies most affected by the phenomenon of depopulation and the brain drain. According to the latest survey undertaken by the Observatory on Youth Policies, only one high school student in five states their intention to build their future in the city where they currently live[48]. The priority given to the current young generations of course does not rule out focus on future generations, i.e. on the children and grandchildren of those who are currently suffering the sharp generational gap mentioned previously, which is a feature of numerous areas of our country.

Against this backdrop, the experience of the **Municipality of Parma** is particularly relevant, which was designated European Youth Capital 2027 and is the first local GIA testbed in Europe, and one of the most advanced in terms of application. With the resolution of the Council no. 156 of 8 May 2023[49], the collaboration with young people led to the creation of focus groups dedicated to classifying the measures of the Single Planning Document (DUP). This approach made it possible to identify a set of indicators for the subsequent assessments and the production of reports that can help establish a replicable model.

In the same vein is the **Municipality of Bologna** which, with the resolution of the Council no. 118 of 21 May 2024, approved the "Guidelines for the planning and Generational Impact Assessment (GIA) of public policies", recalling the definition of sustainable development in the Brundtland Report (1987) and the principles of Agenda 2030, stressing the need for policies that can "satisfy the needs of the present without compromising the possibility of future generations to satisfy theirs"[50].

These experiences are joined by that of the **Municipality of Casalecchio di Reno**, which is gearing up to become the first Italian municipality which is not a provincial capital to formally adopt the GIA, integrating it with co-planning processes which involve youth associations active in the local council. Finally, another important experience is that of the **metropolitan area of Reggio Calabria**, which formally adopted the GIA with a resolution of the Council at the end of December 2025 relating to the DUP 2026-2028. The subsequent marking made it possible to direct towards younger generations some calls for tender funded by the resources of the PON Metro (National Operational Programme for Metropolitan Cities) .

These experiences give rise to a replicable model in order to apply the GIA in medium and small sized municipalities, aimed at mapping municipal policies with a direct or potential impact on the new generations in the main intervention areas: education, culture, sport, tourism, environment, mobility, welfare, work and economic development. Cities which have or are testing the GIA are Milan, Vicenza, L'Aquila, Piacenza and Reggio Calabria.

The growing attention to generational issues at local level has a solid methodological reference point in the "**Guidelines for the Generational impact assessment of the Single Planning Documents of Municipalities**"[51], published by the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI), which propose a model broken down into four main stages:

48 Fondazione per la Ricerca Economica e Sociale ETS, "Il divario generazionale. Nuove generazioni, vecchi squilibri: rompere l'inerzia", VII Rapporto 2025, in press.

49 Parma, resolution of the Council no. 156 of 8 May 2023 atti.comune.parma.it/AttiVisualizzatore/download/delibera/1550104?fId=1551908.

50 Bologna, resolution of the Council no. 118 of 21 May 2024 atti9.comune.bologna.it/atti/wpub_delibere.nsf/%24%24OpenDominoDocument.xsp?documentId=B192F445AEF20AC2C1258B260079F136&action=openDocument.

51 ANCI (2025), anci.lombardia.it/documenti/22325-Linee%20guida%20ANCI%20-%20Valutazione%20Impatto%20Generazionale%20DUP.pdf

With the change made in 2022 the interests of future generations became one of the fundamental principles of the Constitution. The law which introduces the GIA enunciates that the laws of the Republic shall promote intergenerational equity. It is a genuine revolution which imposes a new way of designing public policies.

- classification of actions;
- attribution of the generational indicators;
- periodic monitoring;
- youth consultation.

This testing made it possible to develop a new assessment grid (Check List 2.0)[52], to validate a scale to assess the impact on the four domains set out by COVIGE (education, work, inclusion, wellbeing)[53] and to construct a shared reporting platform for common output and outcome indicators available at municipal level[54].

A further goal of the initiative is to lay the foundations for the construction of an integrated information platform that is essential for the systematic measurement of the generational impacts of local public policies. This goal is part of a particularly important historical and institutional context characterised by the implementation of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP). The most commonly encountered difficulties concern the availability of disaggregated data and the lack of inhouse technical knowhow to construct the indicators. Consequently, **ANCI launched a technical assistance and training programme aimed at local bodies**, which envisages local workshops (the first held in Piacenza, the second in Genoa and the third in Latina) and the provision of a dedicated portal to collect GIA forms and to share good practices.

In conclusion, the experiences described here show how the GIA is scalable and can represent an innovative approach that is coherent with the evolution of the country's institutional and social framework, aimed at enhancing intergenerational cohesion and the sustainability of public policies. The GIA rests on some fundamental principles such as participation, transparency, the measurability of generational effects, elements which, if fully integrated into decision-making processes, can make a substantial contribution to making public action fairer, more inclusive and forward-looking.

This arrangement without doubt represents **an opportunity to consolidate the culture of assessing public policies and to facilitate a systemic approach to planning**, but it depends on stable investment in administrative training, civic participation and structured interaction between institutions and young citizens. If not, the risk is that it is reduced to a mere formal and self-referential exercise, which is incapable of generating those transformative processes which are its rationale and added value in the overall design of public policies.

The pioneering experiences set out here show how the path to follow is still complex and requires a shared commitment based on the direct involvement of associations, academia and young generations, so that the GIA can truly become not just a structural instrument of intergenerational equity and responsibility but also a means of enhancing the attractiveness of local areas.

52 ANCI (2025), p.10.
53 Idem, p. 22.
54 Idem, pp. 33-39.

GIA in local administrations

Municipality of Parma
The GIA involves an *ex ante* analysis of each municipal policy to assess its effects on younger generations, particularly citizens aged 15 to 35 (the age range defined by the national guidelines). The field of application covers both the strategic projects of the Municipality and the relevant individual administrative provisions, in order to "provide concrete responses to its young people" and combat the generation gap at local level.

The implementation of the GIA in Parma started with detailed analytical work on the authority's Single Planning Document (*Documento Unico di Programmazione*, DUP) 2023-2025. The DUP is the document which in the medium term plans all municipal interventions (works, services, projects): the technical staff of the Municipality, with the support of experts, reviewed all the goals and envisaged actions, marking each item on the basis of its generational relevance. Then a form of labelling was established for each measure:

- **generational measure**: if aimed exclusively and directly at a young target (e.g. a call to tender for startups by under 35s, a service for students, etc.);

- **potentially generational measure**: although not specifically designed for young people, it may have mainly positive effects on them (for example, an urban regeneration initiative that can be used by all citizens, but which it is estimated will above all benefit young people, or a training course open to all, but which probably will be used by numerous under 35s). This classification presupposes a forward-looking assessment: it is estimated that the number of young beneficiaries will be a higher percentage than their demographic weight, or elements are identified in the project (incentives, priority access) that can facilitate youth participation;

- **neutral measure** (non-generational): if neither positive nor negative specific effects are noted for the target of young people (an equal impact across all age ranges);

- **anti-generational measure**: if an intervention risks prejudicing the development of young people or placing burdens on them (for example, excessive debt to finance current spending can be labelled as anti-generational since it binds future resources, or a town-planning choice which removes space for young people to the benefit of other interests).

Following this conceptual mapping exercise, Parma developed a methodological framework. On 17 January 2024, the Municipal Executive adopted the "Guidelines for Generational Impact Assessment", which require every draft resolution submitted to the municipal bodies for approval to include a section specifying whether the proposed measure falls within one of the categories described above, together with a brief assessment of its expected impact on young people. Where negative impacts or missed opportunities for young people are identified, the administration is required to highlight it and – if possible – to introduce corrections or mitigations. In addition, Parma intends to equip itself with a system of indicators to monitor *in itinere* and ex post the real effects on young people of the measures adopted. After initial testing and a detailed training process which involved most of the municipal officers, today the Generational impact assessment is an integral part of all the administrative processes launched by the Municipality and since 2025 a necessary condition (in the formal validation process) before proceeding to adopting the related determinations or executive acts.

The initiative has been promoted by the municipal administration, especially by the Department for Youth Policies together with the Department for Planning. The involvement of the Emilia-Romagna Region and the Province of Parma is also significant: in fact, the Municipality worked with other territorial bodies to share experiences and data (for example, the initiative was presented in regional meetings and the Region showed interest in extending it). Currently the local GIA is above all a qualitative exercise in labelling and descriptive analysis, while it would be desirable to evolve towards a quantitative and assessment-based approach too. In addition, the Municipality could encounter problems in sourcing specific data at municipal level on some youth phenomena: it will therefore be necessary to invest in municipal information systems or to collaborate with universities to obtain the necessary data. Finally, it should be noted that some policies affecting young people do not fall within the municipality's remit and that the initiative's long-term sustainability will depend on the commitment of future administrations.

Municipality of Bologna
Also the Municipality of Bologna decided to introduce the GIA into its policies, making its adoption official in May 2024, when the Municipal Council approved the Guidelines, which largely copy the national guidelines and the experience in Parma, adapting them to the local administrative context. Bologna too envisages applying the GIA to all municipal acts that concern planning or regulation. In drawing up a resolution, offices must indicate whether the proposal contains generational or potentially generational measures, or not, and justify this classification with a brief analysis. For now the GIA in Bologna is at an initial stage: the priority is to integrate the analysis into internal decision-making processes. A key role is being played by the municipal statistical office which is engaged in making available the indicators necessary to determine the targets of the measures marked as generational or potentially such.

Emilia-Romagna Region
The Emilia-Romagna Region has acted as promoter and facilitator of the GIA at local level. Albeit it does not currently have a regional law which requires such an assessment, the Region has supported pilot tests and integrated the theme into its own planning policies. Emilia-Romagna is a region with a relatively elderly population, but at the same time with important youth hubs (universities, innovation clusters) and has demonstrated its attention to the requests of young people through initiatives such as YOUZ – Forum giovani ER, a public consultation programme launched in 2021 to design the "Region of the future" with contributions from the under-35s.

In the same vein, the Region sees the GIA as an instrument to institutionalise the attention on young people not only in municipalities, but also in its own policies, especially in light of implementation of the NRRP (a youth focus being one of the crosscutting priorities of the Plan) and other policies financed by European funds. The regional goal is twofold: on the one hand, to support municipalities in equipping themselves with the GIA, perhaps creating a model that can be replicated in all municipalities; on the other, to apply the GIA concept in regional development programmes, in order to guarantee generational equity also at supra-municipal level.

The Region, therefore, through its service company ART-ER and in collaboration with Fondazione RiES, in 2022-2024 carried out a prefeasibility study to integrate the GIA into the assessment of ERDF and ESF+ programmes co-financed by the European Union. An important aspect of this initiative was the definition of a set of indicators that can measure how the interventions financed will impact on young people.

Measuring equity between generations: the intergenerational justice index

As we have seen, Europe and Italy are undergoing a profound transformation in which the decline in the younger population and the increase in the older population are redefining social, economic and political relations, disrupting a balance that was taken for granted for decades. It is in this context that measuring intergenerational imbalances and levels of intergenerational justice can have operational value since it makes it possible to observe, through comparable data, whether the pact between generations – which should guarantee dignity for older people and prospects for young people – is faltering or can be renewed.

Statistical research on the theme of indicators of equity between generations has still not led to the production of consolidated results and the definition of internationally recognised methodologies. An interesting experience[55] resulted in the calculation of the intergenerational justice index (IJI), **which aims to measure systematically how far European societies manage to guarantee equal conditions and opportunities across different age groups**, transforming an ethical principle – equity between generations – into an empirical instrument that can orient public policies. The IJI adopts a simple but ambitious concept: justice between generations does not consist of the identical treatment of the different ages, but rather guaranteeing that each group has available the appropriate resources for their stage of life. It therefore assumes a vision of the relations between generations similar to that which underpins the concept of sustainable development drawn up by the aforementioned Brundtland Commission.

The indicators selected for the purposes of constructing the IJI do not measure an absolute condition, but the relative gap between the two groups: young adults (aged 25-34) and older adults, defined as 55 to 64 for economic aspects and over 65 for the aspects of wellbeing, relations and participation. This methodological choice is at the same time pragmatic and normative: pragmatic, because it avoids complex forecasts on the cohorts and focuses on the effective conditions in which generations live today; regulatory, because it captures the current distribution of burdens and benefits within the same institutional system.

The selected indicators are grouped into four dimensions corresponding to four pillars of social justice of social justice:

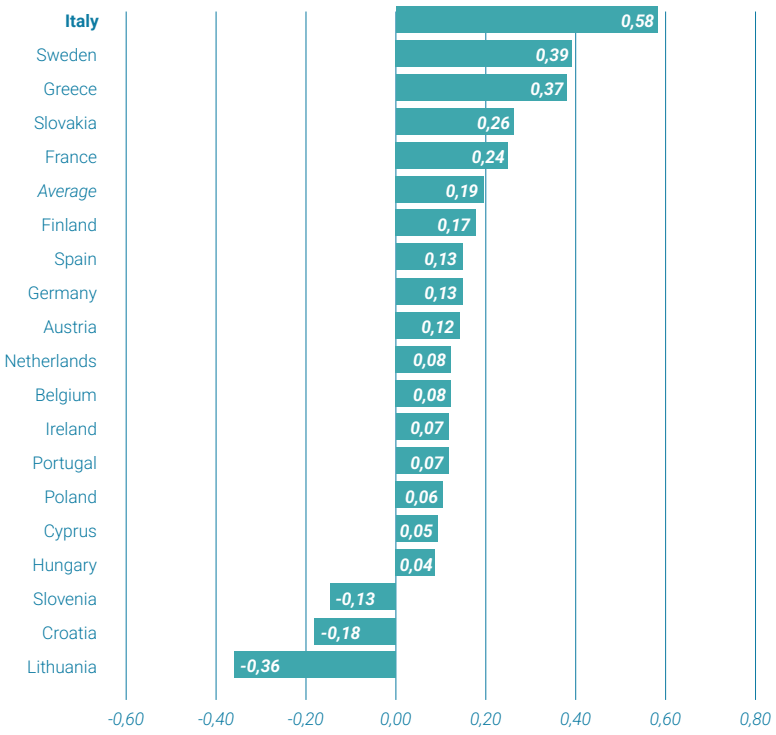
- economic equity;
- access to essential public services;
- relational equity;
- political equity.

Each aspect is standardised against the average of the nineteen European countries considered, so as to assess not a country's overall wealth, but how it is distributed across generations. The standard rule adopted – by which positive values indicate an advantage for older people and negative values an advantage for young people – makes the comparison among the various countries immediate.

To calculate the IJI, only datasets harmonised at European level have been used, so as to guarantee comparability between countries and internal coherence across the indicators. The main sources are EU-SILC data, European statistics on income and living conditions, and those collected with the European Social Survey (ESS). The EU-SILC data provide information on poverty, job insecurity, wages, housing conditions and the ability of households to handle unexpected expenses. This databank gives rise to many of the indicators which make up the aspect of economic equity, which represents one of the most critical areas of the relationship between young people and older people.

Measuring intergenerational equity can be done by following various approaches. The Intergenerational Justice Index shows for Italy a gap that is growing over time and particularly disadvantaging young people, women and southern Italy

55 Galasso, V., Galeotti, A., Bellia, A., Biale, E., Burelli, C., Pala, D., Ruiz-Tagle Coloma, C., Santi Amantini, L., and Zuccarelli, G., "An Index of Intergenerational Justice: Main Concepts and Preliminary Evidence from the Age-It Research Program", forthcoming, The Journals of Gerontology, Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences.



Index consisting of:
1) poverty
2) unemployment
3) permanent contract
4) pay difference
5) housing overcrowding
6) financial difficulties

***Figure 7**. Measure of intergenerational economic equity*

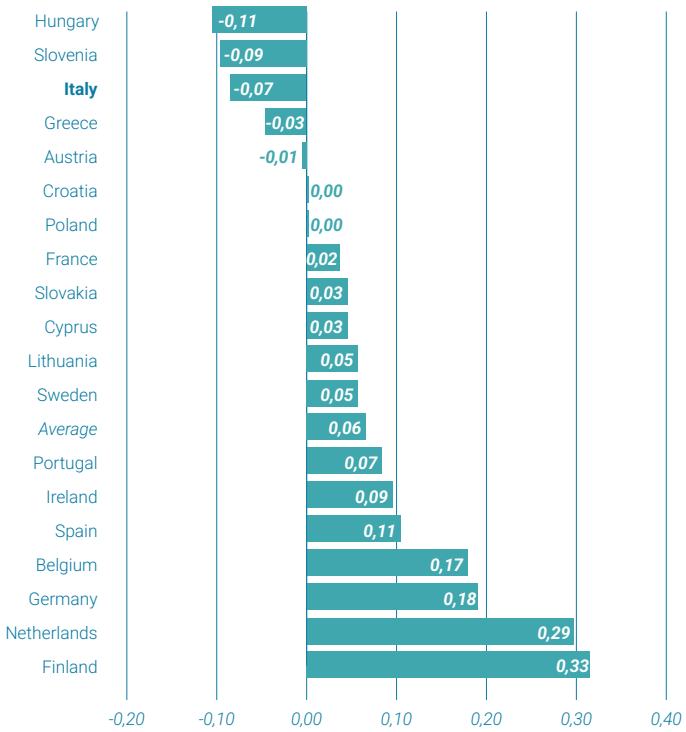
The ESS is a survey which collects data on attitudes, social relations, mental wellbeing, perceived discrimination and civic participation. Through this survey it is possible to measure phenomena such as loneliness, the quality of relations, the sense of social recognition and the perception of having a say in political life. These aspects make up the dimensions of relational equity and political equity, which are considered central elements to understand whether a society really manages to include all generations in their decision-making processes and in their life in the community. The IJI also integrates two other important institutional sources: the "Manifesto Project", which systematically codifies the programmes of European parties and makes it possible to understand how much space and how much attention are dedicated to the issues which regard young people and old, and the WARP database, which collects information on the age composition of national parliaments and measures the generational imbalance in political representation.

The construction of the index takes place through a process of standardisation which makes the indicators comparable and makes it possible to easily interpret the final values. Each indicator is transformed so that a positive value indicates an advantage for older people and a negative value an advantage for young adults. This approach guarantees an immediate readout of the intergenerational gap.

The IJI is not a simple statistical exercise, but a measurement system that makes transparent the mechanisms through which a society distributes resources, services, power and recognition. The choice of sources, the definition of indicators and the comparison between co-existing groups and not between cohorts that are distant in terms of time converge in a precise goal: to clearly show where the pact between generations is weakening and where, instead, it can be strengthened through targeted policies. It is from this methodological base that the most important results emerge: the persistent economic gaps, the fragilities in access to services, the imbalances in social relations and, above all, the asymmetry in participation and in political representation.

The framework which emerges from the analysis of the data is, at the same time, clear and complex. Clear because no aspect leaves room for ambiguous interpretation: there are structural advantages and disadvantages, which are often clearly distributed. Complex because these advantages are not always concentrated on the same generation, or in all countries. In other words, there is no single Europe of intergenerational justice, but a geography of imbalances which offset and overlap one another.

One of the areas where the asymmetry is clearer is that of economic equity (Figure 7). Older people enjoy clearly favourable positions: they have more chances of working with stable con-



Index consisting of:
1) unmet healthcare needs
2) social transfers
3) exposure to pollution
4) exposure to criminality
5) Internet connection

***Figure 8**. Measure of intergenerational equity in access to services*

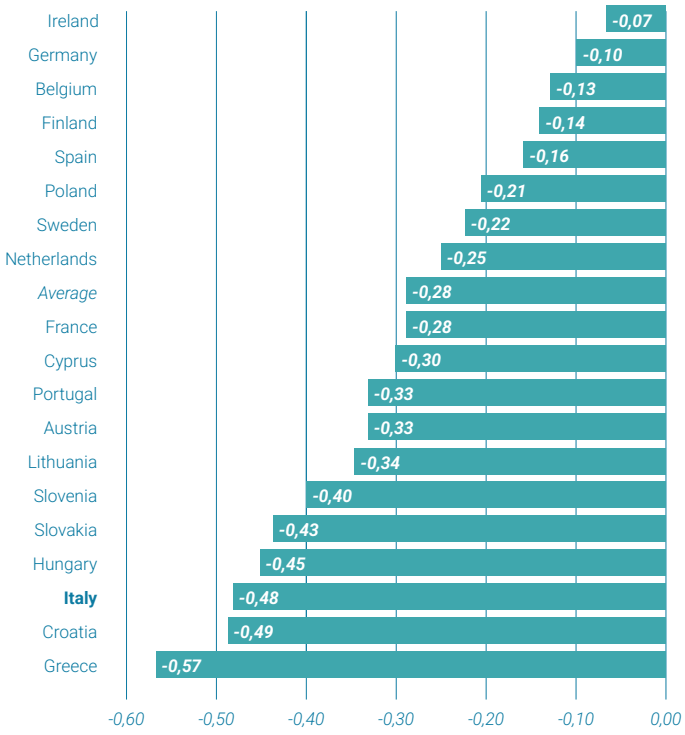
tracts, they have higher pay also when education levels are comparable, they live in adequate housing and are more protected against unexpected shocks thanks to more solid financial reserves. Young people, on the contrary, are trapped in polarised labour markets, marked by chronic job insecurity and inadequate pay, and have more difficulty in having their own home.

Housing overcrowding, which is very widespread in southern Europe, is an obstacle to constructing personal and family independence. In Italy and in Greece, the difference in treatment between workers with protected contracts – often more elderly – and those with temporary contracts, largely young people, further amplifies the gap. Overall, in **the economic sphere, sixteen countries out of nineteen have a clear advantage for older people**. This raises a crucial question: how can a society which aspires to cohesion support the idea of the future if young people struggle to achieve the economic independence necessary to build it?

As regards access to essential services, the picture is more varied. Here too the index reveals imbalances, but not always in the same direction. Older people more frequently report unmet healthcare needs, above all in systems weighed down by long waiting lists and high healthcare co-payments, as in Italy, Greece and Belgium. At the same time, however, they more often live in safer social and environmental contexts, less exposed to crime, pollution and urban decay. Young people, concentrated in metropolitan areas, instead experience more crowded, more competitive and often less healthy environments. Internet access is no longer a relevant divide between ages, while social transfers (net ofpensions) reflect the characteristics of national welfare regimes which are more or less redistributive towards younger age groups. **Twelve countries show an advantage for older people in access to services**, especially Finland, the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium.

The third dimension of the IJI, that of relational equity, offers a look at social networks, mental wellbeing and experiences of discrimination. In almost all European countries, people aged 25 to 34 are advantaged: they participate more frequently in recreational activities, they maintain broader relational networks and, on average, report lower levels of loneliness. On the contrary, older people are more vulnerable to isolation, above all after retiring and given fragile health.

Nonetheless, this dimension highlights a crucial phenomenon which public debate tends to underestimate: **discrimination based on age affects both ends of the life cycle**. In various countries, including Slovakia and Finland, it is younger generations who more frequently report episodes of exclusion or unfair treatment linked to stereotypes of immaturity. So ageism is not just a problem "of older people", but a crosscutting social mechanism which can be a hurdle to both the recognition of young people on the job market and in public life, and to the dignity of older people in the later stages of life.



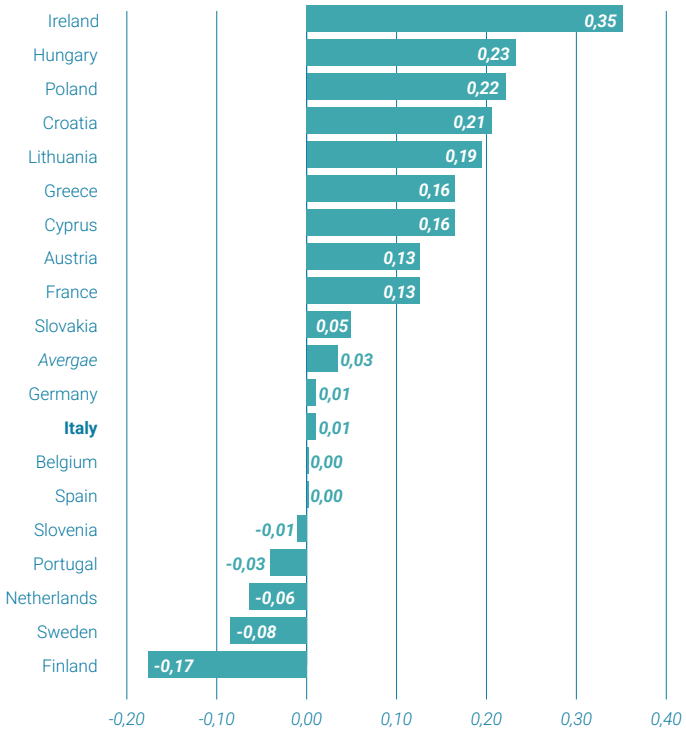
Index consisting of:
1) leisure activities
2) social relations
3) close relations
4) discrimination
5) mental wellbeing

***Figure 9**. Measure of intergenerational relational equity*

Finally, **political equity is the sphere in which intergenerational imbalance seems most deeply rooted**. The data show that old people participate more frequently in political life, feel they are more influential, vote more regularly and are better represented in national parliaments. The agendas of political parties consequently address issues which more closely concern older people, while education, youth labour and family policies are less central.

This does not mean that young people are disinterested in politics; many of them state that they feel capable of having an impact. However, this perception does not translate into effective participation. The result is a democratic deficit that risks driving a vicious circle: less participation leads to less representation, and less representation makes it even more difficult to reverse the initial gap.

When the four dimensions are integrated into the overall measurement of the intergenerational justice index, most European countries seem balanced. However, this balance is misleading, since it often derives from the offset between advantages and disadvantages which fall on different generations in different areas. Italy, for example, regularly favours older people in the economic and political dimension, but tends to be more favourable to young people in access to services and in relations. Countries such as Croatia, Lithuania and Slovenia have the opposite. Nordic systems, which are often considered models of advanced welfare, paradoxically show major gaps in political representation, albeit guaranteeing fairer services. Other differences derive from the structure of family systems: in southern Europe, informal support networks partly offset economic inequalities, while in eastern Europe the recent reforms have triggered rapid transformation which are reflected in the more volatile indicators.

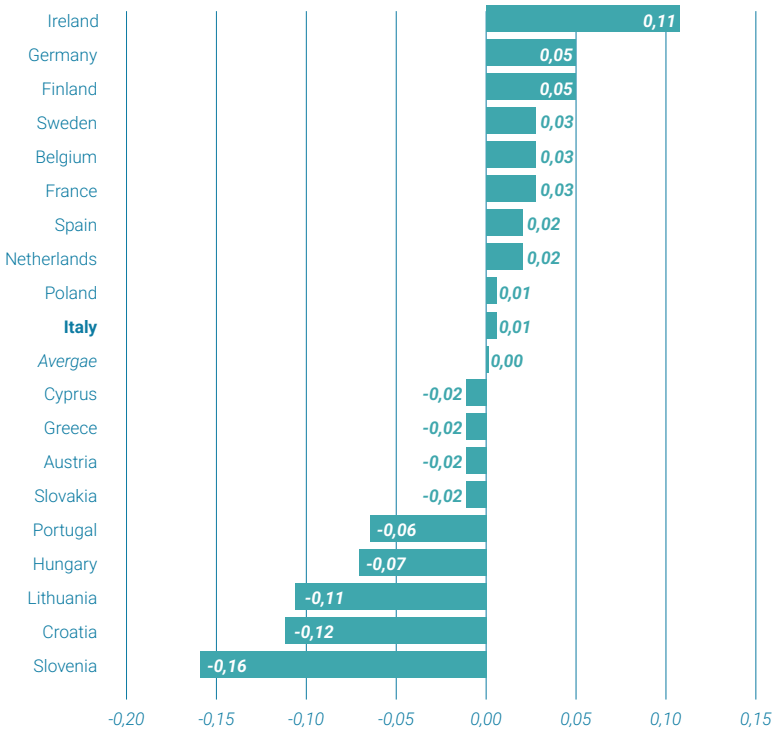


Index consisting of:
1) having a say
2) influencing
3) electoral participation
4) closeness to a political party
5) interest in politics
6) programmes of aprties
7) representation by age in Parliament

***Figure 10**. Measure of intergenerational political equity*

Equity between generations does not necessarily coincide with a high level of public spending, or with a particular welfare model. What counts is the distribution of resources throughout the life cycle, the timeliness of investments in critical phases and the capacity of institutions to respond to the needs of those now entering adulthood and those going through the final stages of their life. It is in this complementarity that there exists the possibility of rebuilding a more solid intergenerational pact. Strengthening a part of the pact means also consolidating the other, because intergenerational justice is not a zero-sum game.

The IJI clearly shows that young adults are disadvantaged above all where society should accompany them in the shift to an independent life: work, home, representation. Instead, older people are fragile in those very areas where society should support them in their vulnerable phase: health, relations, social participation. The IJI thus suggests a way forward: do not set younger and older generations against one another, but intervene on the mechanisms which prevent each from fully living the period of life they find themselves in. This is the political and social crux on which to build a new balance.



Index consisting of:
1) economic equality
2) access to essential servies
3) relational equity
4) political equity

***Figure 11**. Measure of overall intergenerational in justice*

Assessing the intergenerational impact of public policies by using models

Law No. 167/2025 defines GIA as an "ex ante assessment" of the "environmental or social effects caused by provisions and which fall on young people and on future generations, with particular attention to intergenerational equity". It is highly unlikely that in this initial phase of implementing the new provisions analytical tools specifically designed for GIA are already available, above all in such a broad area as that indicated by the law, but there is no lack of instruments that can provide valid indications.

The classes of models used by economists estimate the trend of numerous economic variables for given circumstances and policies. Their utility for the purposes of a generational impact assessment of the new laws can therefore seem limited, since the economic effects do not fall within the confines of the GIA. Nonetheless, they contain some relevant variables to assess the social effects (for example, income or consumption due to being in poverty) and, sometimes, include environmental variables. More generally, they offer a conceptual framework which can be extended in the desired directions.

On the operational level, **in order to carry out a GIA it is necessary, on the one hand, to identify the various generations being analysed and, on the other, to define the principles of intergenerational equity and the instruments to measure it.** For example,the analysis may concern either generations of different ages coexisting at a given point in time (young people, adults, elderly) and those present and future generations over a long or infinite time horizon. In both cases, the criteria must be defined which separate one generation from another, taking account of the fact that they can vary over time. Moreover, the evaluative framework for intergenerational equity changes depending on the principle of distributive justice that is adopted (Sen 1992). So equity can, for example, be assessed in regard to income (current or over the whole life), utility, the opportunities an individual has, the capabilities a person has to achieve the conditions they consider important for their life.

Finally, numerous statistical indices make it possible to measure the degree of inequality between generations (and within generations) in the chosen space for assessment, whether one-dimensional or multidimensional. They differ depending on the underlying value judgment (Atkinson 1970), which can be connected to the weight that the index implicitly assigns to individuals in different positions for the distribution of the relevant variable.

Let us now see how the existing models make it possible to address the three aforementioned questions.

Microsimulation models

Microsimulation models arise from Orcutt's intuition (1957) that it was necessary to use all the diversity in the data (sample-based or administrative) in order to move beyond the limits of macroeconomic models, especially for the purposes of distributive analysis, and at the same time to model individual decisions more precisely. Thanks to the use of computers with ever greater computing power, microsimulation models have gradually consolidated as the instrument to estimate the impact of changes in fiscal and social policies, both hypothesising that labour and consumption decisions of economic agents are not influenced by them and introducing behavioural responses induced by those changes (Figari et al. 2015).

Over time these models have become an essential instrument to produce an informed assessment of the distributional effects of public policies, to the benefit not only of political decision-makers, but also of public opinion overall, as hoped for by Atkinson (1990).

There are various models to undertake impact assessment of policies (microsimulation, overlapping generations, generational accounting, etc.). Some make it possible to estimate redistributive effects over time and between cohorts, but methodological investment is needed to make them fully usable for the GIA on environmental and social aspects.

In all advanced countries, there are numerous "static" microsimulation models which assess the effects of changes in policies only in the year of their introduction. Some of these models also incorporate behavioural responses, such as changes in labour supply or in savings choices induced by changes in policies.

This class of models makes it possible to analyse how a given policy influences equity between the generations present in the year of the simulation, so between young people, adults and older people, but cannot tell us anything on equity over a long time horizon. The area for assessment is generally that of income, even if, besides estimating the impact on the average values by age classes, with these models it is possible to calculate all the indices of inequality and poverty that are habitually used by the relevant literature.

Various static microsimulation models are commonly used in Italy. At institutional level, the Bank of Italy (Curci et al. 2017), the Parliamentary Budget Office and Istat have developed their own models which must be continuously updated with the regulatory innovations in fiscal and social policies. In recent years, also in academia, the use of EUROMOD has become common, the microsimulation model of the systems of taxes and transfers of EU countries managed and updated by the European Commission, access to which is free for all interested researchers.

"Dynamic" microsimulation models, which are closer to Orcutt's original idea, instead adopt a multi-period framework: they simulate the evolution over time of the life of individuals, taking account both of exogenous demographic events, such as births and deaths, and of the choices made by people relating to the creation of a family, to work and to retirement, to consumption and to savings. By their very nature, having a long time horizon, they can be used for distributive analysis between present and future generations, as well as for coexisting generations, as for static models. In this case too, the area for assessment is generally that of income, which could be conceptually calculated for the whole life cycle. In Italy, one of the main examples is the T-DYMM model (Conti et al. 2023), developed by the Ministry of Economy and Finance, which makes it possible to simulate the impact of pension, fiscal and welfare reforms on different generational cohorts.

Overlapping-generations models

Heterogeneous-agent overlapping-generations (OLG) models are a class of models of dynamic general equilibrium which analyse the macroeconomic and distributive effects of economic policy measures, mainly budget policy measures. In such models every individual has a finite life horizon, but sufficiently long to allow coexistence with other individuals born in different periods, i.e. generations of individuals "overlap" with one another.

The theoretical structure of a simple OLG model can be summarised as follows. In each period a new cohort of individuals is born; each individual takes (optimal) decisions on savings and work in order to maximise their utility over a finite lifetime horizon. Firms act under perfect competition conditions: given the prices, in order to maximise profits they seek labour and capital, which are offered by households, in order to use them as inputs in the production of goods. The government levies taxes and issues public debt to finance spending, in particular for social security; in this way, it influences the choices of households and firms, the production and distribution of intergenerational income and wealth (between living and future cohorts) and intragenerational (between individuals in a cohort). Prices are determined by the simultaneous equilibrium between supply and demand in each market and in each period (dynamic stochastic general equilibrium).

An extensive body of literature has worked on and modified this base model in various directions. The first models are "deterministic" and individuals, in taking decisions, do not take into account the uncertainty and the risk factors. In addition, the sole form of difference among the individuals consists of age: their decisions differ because they are in different phases of the life cycle (for example, they have a preference for consumption which depends on age), but in any case they have available the same total amount of resources during their existence (Auerbach and Kotlikoff 1987).

The subsequent models are also deterministic, but they hypothesise that individuals differ also in terms of the income received during their life (Fullerton and Rogers 1993). In the most recent models, the sources of diversity multiply: for example, the use of cash can be connected with income, with age (higher for older people) or with the birth cohort (due to the greater capability to adapt to innovation of the new generations) (Cao et al. 2021).

Then there are "stochastic" models. In some, individuals save on a precautionary basis to address possible risks that cannot be insured against (for example, uncertainty on pay), but the evolution of the aggregate variables remains deterministic

(Conesa et al. 2009; Heathcote et al. 2009). In other, more recent models, the idiosyncratic shocks of each individual are joined by the shocks to the aggregate variables (Hasanhodzic and Kotlikoff 2013; Glover et al. 2020). The solution of these models "with aggregate risk" is very complex from the computational viewpoint.

OLG models are usually "calibrated": the values of the parameters, which define households' preferences, the technical production conditions of firms or the distribution of idiosyncratic risk, are set in line with the microeconomic empirical evidence and in a way that the model replicates, in the absence of shocks (i.e. a steady state), the values of some macroeconomic and financial variables observed in a given period (for example the ratio between physical capital used by firms and GDP, the interest rate, the ratio between the income from a particular form of taxation and GDP).

To assess the impact of economic policies, the value of wellbeing or welfare in the initial long-term equilibrium is compared with that in the final equilibrium generated by the policies adopted (stationary states that are invariable over time); if the dynamic solution of the model is possible from the computational viewpoint, the impact is also assessed during the transition from the initial stationary state to the final state (Heathcote et al. 2020).

The wellbeing of an individual, or of a cohort of individuals, is measured by its function of expected discounted intertemporal utility. It can be assessed from an ex ante perspective under the so-called "veil of ignorance", which hypothesises that the individual does not know in what position they will be placed in the distribution of resources (Rawls 1971). Although it is the intertemporal utility that defines the space for assessment, wellbeing is generally converted into "equivalent consumption", which is defined as the percentage variation that the individual's consumption should register in the absence of the economic policy measure, in order to equate the wellbeing to that consequent to the measure in every year between the implementation of the economic policy measure and the individual's death. The impact of policies can also be measured by the discounted flow of the transfers which each cohort receives, net of the taxes paid (Nishiyama and Reichling 2015).

In order to assess social wellbeing, it is necessary to choose which weights to use to aggregate the wellbeing of both the individuals in each generation and of the various generations through an appropriate discount rate. In the first case, it is possible to attribute the same importance to the individuals of a cohort by assigning the same weight to their expected utility; or it is possible to attribute a different weight to the individuals on the basis of the political decision-maker's aversion to inequality (Atkinson 1970). In the second case, it is possible to discount the utility of future generations on the basis of the preferences of individuals (the rate with which individuals discount utility over their life cycle) or of the political decision-maker.

The discount rate is a crucial parameter in any assessment of generational equity, since it impacts on the distribution of wellbeing between generations: the closer it is to 1, the greater is the weight assigned to the future generations. For example, a high discount rate would justify immediate implementation of measures aimed at reducing CO2 emissions, while a lower rate would justify their deferment (Nordhaus 2007).

OLG models are used by various institutions to analyse policies. The European Commission uses the EDGE-M3 model, in which there are 80 cohorts and seven income classes, to simulate, for example, taxation reforms in the member states of the European Union (D'Andria et al. 2020). In the United States, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) uses a model with a high number of diverse cohorts and individuals to assess the long-term impact of budget policy (CBO 2025). The International Monetary Fund uses a new-Keynesian model (with short-term nominal and monetary policy rigidities) with numerous countries (Kumhof et al. 2010), in which the structure of the overlapping generations is nonetheless simplified to make the model useable.

Generational accounting is a methodology introduced by Auerbach, Gokhale and Kotlikoff (1991) to estimate the net fiscal burden that different generations must bear during their life, taking account of the taxes paid and the transfers received. Based on the intertemporal equilibrium of public accounts, it makes it possible to highlight any imbalances between present and future generations. This approach was applied in various countries to study the degree of intergenerational equity of public policies (Auerbach and Kotlikoff 1999) and their coherence with the sustainability of public accounts. The concept of sustainability used refers to all present and future general government revenue and expenditure commitments, regardless of the accounting choices over time of the main budget indicators (deficit and debt).

Compared to OLG modelling, in this approach prices are given and not determined by the balance between demand and supply; individuals do not react to the changes in public policies by changing their consumption choices and labour supply. Given these limitations, generational accounting makes it possible to assess, succinctly, the degree of inequality between generations implicit in the set of fiscal and social protection policies without relying on strong modelling hypotheses and calibrations of parameters that may be open to question.

In Italy, generational accounting was applied for the first time in a study which highlighted how high public debt and demographic ageing put fiscal sustainability at risk (Franco et al. 1994). The exercise was subsequently updated to assess the impact of the regulatory changes made in the meantime (Rizza and Tommasino, 2010). Recently, this approach has been used to compare the sustainability of the public accounts in the United States and in Italy (Dicarlo et al. 2025). This study shows that, despite a lower current level of debt to GDP ratio, the fiscal adjustment required to guarantee intertemporal budget balance is much higher in the United States than in Italy, requiring an increase in taxes or a cut in spending (immediate and permanent) of respectively around 25% and 7%. In both countries, the deferral of the adjustment would imply placing on future generations a net tax rate over the whole life cycle of over 100%.

In conclusion, static microsimulation models are limited to analysing the distributive effects between generations living in the same period. Dynamic microsimulation models make it possible to analyse in detail the evolution of income and conduct over time of successive generations, offering a realistic assessment of the effects of policies, which considers the distributive aspects. However, their technical complexity and dependence on the quality of the data can be a limit, above all in contexts where microeconomic information is not complete or up to date.

Overlapping generation models enable the analysis, in general economic equilibrium, of the dynamic effects of economic policy measures, especially budget measures, on the intragenerational and intergenerational distributions of wealth and on the macroeconomic variables, also given idiosyncratic risk which cannot easily be insured against through market mechanisms. The complexity of the methods to resolve this class of models markedly increases by introducing aggregate uncertainty.

Generational accounting models offer a concise and aggregate vision of the fiscal equilibrium between generations, which is particularly useful for analyses of long-term fiscal sustainability. However, they do not capture differences within generations or model individual behaviour.

For the purposes of the GIA envisaged by Law no. 167/2025, the existing models at Italian public institutions can enable analysis of specific policies, especially economic policies. Other models, developed by private institutions (Centro Euro-mediterraneo per i Cambiamenti Climatici, Prometeia, etc.) make it possible to carry out analyses that also include social and environmental dimensions. **From this brief overview the need therefore emerges for significant investment to improve and integrate the existing models, in order to render them capable of responding to the new needs imposed by the GIA**.

The private sector and intergenerational equity

Assessing the choices of the private sector in the light of intergenerational equity means examining to what extent present economic activities impact on the availability of resources, on development opportunities and on the overall wellbeing of future generations. This analysis implies **a shift from the short-term decision-making horizon, which is typical of market dynamics, to a broader consideration of the processes of accumulating and consuming capital in the long term**. In this perspective, the conduct of firms cannot be interpreted solely in the light of maximising immediate profit, but must be assessed in reference to the social and environmental costs that such strategies produce and their distribution over time.

A first area for analysis regards the role of intergenerational externalities. Many of the activities of the private sector produce effects that are not directly borne by the actors that generate them. Negative externalities, in particular, may transfer significant costs to future generations. The clearest example is the environmental impact of production processes: climate-changing emissions, degradation of ecosystems, excessive consumption of non-renewable resources and accumulation of waste are environmental liabilities which will become fully manifest in the long term. Therefore, the degree of intergenerational equity of a private choice also depends on the company's ability to internalise these costs – by adopting lower impact technologies, the transition to circular production models or the recourse to climate mitigation and adaptation strategies – avoiding the transfer of unsustainable burdens to the future.

The second crucial element regards the question of the discount rate to be used in cost-benefit assessments. **The private sector generally adopts high discount rates, which make investments with returns deferred over time economically unfavourable**. Nonetheless, equity between generations requires a different assessment of future benefits, since an excessive discount rate leads to systematically underestimating the value of the wellbeing of subsequent generations. In literature, the replacement of a private discount rate with a social discount rate makes it possible to attribute a greater weight to the long-term consequences, facilitating decisions aimed at intertemporal sustainability. The adoption of cost-benefit analyses to integrate these elements, together with scenarios that are sensitive to the long-term variables, is an essential instrument to assess the coherence of corporate strategies with the principles of intergenerational equity.

A complementary analytical perspective is that based on the theory of capital, according to which sustainable development requires maintaining or growing the overall stock of capital available to future generations. This concept includes various dimensions: natural capital relating to environmental resources and to ecosystems; human capital, which includes knowhow, health and training; social capital, in the sense of the quality of relations, institutional trust and community cohesion; and, finally, physical capital which can be connected to infrastructure and technologies. The assessment of the choices of the private sector must therefore consider the effective contribution of firms to the conservation or degradation of these forms of capital. **Strategies aimed solely at maximising the financial return in the short-term risk compromising the equilibrium between capital consumed and capital regenerated, causing regressive effects on future wellbeing**.

In analysing corporate practices, an important role is played by methodologies to assess the impact over the whole production cycle, and in particular by life cycle assessment (LCA). This instrument makes it possible to systematically assess the environmental impacts associated with each stage of the production process, from the sourcing of raw materials to the disposal of the finished product. This approach is crucial for examination of intergenerational equity, since it makes it possible to identify hidden environmental costs which are deferred over time and which might not emerge in analyses focused solely on the short term. In addition, the LCA helps highlight the long-term implications of design and management choices for products, favouring practices to minimise the total environmental footprint.

Alongside technical instruments, intergenerational equity is expressed also in the governance structure of firms.

Intergenerational equity must be a principle practiced also by firms and by financial institutions. Good sustainability practices, decent work and long-term investments show that the private sector can concretely offer opportunities to young generations that are coherent with their expectations.

Long-term-oriented corporate governance should integrate sustainability criteria within decision-making processes, avoiding the pressure to generate quarterly results negatively influencing the company's ability to pursue goals that are coherent with intergenerational responsibility. In this context, **the mechanisms of non-financial reporting are important, as well as the transparency of information, independent checks of ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) reporting and the presence of managerial incentive systems that can reward strategies that are sustainable over time**. Some theoretical proposals suggest the introduction of institutional mechanisms responsible for representing the interests of future generations, in order to counterbalance the market orientation to the present day.

A further assessment criterion involves analysing the coherence of business strategies with international goals and frameworks, such as the SDGs or commitments arising from the Paris Agreement. The alignment of corporate policies with these objectives acts as an indicator of the company's ability to contribute to the systemic transformations necessary to guarantee decent living conditions for future generations. This is true in particular for the energy transition and decarbonisation, which are central elements in defining a global pathway compatible with the planet's bio-physical limits.

From a theoretical and normative perspective, various paradigms contribute to setting out the concept of intergenerational equity. The aforementioned Rawlsian approach of "just savings" underlines the moral obligation to transmit to subsequent generations a set of institutions and conditions to enable a quality of life that is at least equivalent. The capability approach, developed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, instead stresses the possibility for future individuals to develop their own fundamental capabilities. Finally, the green economy calls attention to the biophysical limits of economic activities and supports the need to preserve natural capital in a form that cannot be replaced.

In the Italian case, the aforementioned change to art. 41 of the Constitution sets firms an extremely complex challenge: in fact it states that "private economic initiative is free. It cannot be undertaken in contrast with social utility or in such a way as to harm health, the environment, security, freedom, and human dignity. The law determines the opportune programmes and checks so that public and private economic activity can be directed and coordinated for social and environmental ends". In this regard, it is interesting to note that the first part of the text refers only to private initiative, while the second also includes public initiative, which places on the shoulders of public enterprises and on public administrations significant responsibility to achieve sustainable development.

To understand the potential impact of the reform on firms, it must be noted that in the "Priolo judgment" (no. 105 of 13 June 2024) the Constitutional Court declared the provision unconstitutional of the provision with which the Government had ordered, for reasons linked to the country's strategic needs, the continuation of the operation of a polluting plant since it did not envisage a maximum deadline within which to restructure it so as not to cause negative effects on the environment. In this sentence the Court stated that the continuation of the company's business can be ordered only through a reasonable and carefully considered balancing exercise of the aforementioned constitutional values in accordance with criteria of proportionality and reasonableness, "a balancing exercise that was absent in this case since the regulatory intervention ended up favouring the continuation of production".

In conclusion, assessing the contribution of the private sector to intergenerational equity requires a combination of analytical, theoretical and regulatory instruments. This implies examining the impact of corporate choices on intertemporal externalities, adopting appropriate discount rates, considering the role of firms in maintaining total capital, using integrated analytical methodologies such as the LCA, and verifying the coherence of corporate strategies with global sustainability goals. **Intergenerational equity thus becomes an essential criterion to assess the company's social responsibility** and, at the same time, a reference parameter to interpret the contribution of the private sector to long-term sustainable development.

Private sector and intergenerational equity: examples of good practice

The initiatives developed by the private sector, by the voluntary sector and by the non-profit sector are an essential contribution to promoting the principle of intergenerational equity. Through interventions aimed at environmental regeneration, social cohesion and creating lasting opportunities over time, these organisations act directly and indirectly on the quality of life of future generations. This happens both by reducing the costs and risks inherited (e.g. environmental degradation, social inequalities, educational poverty), and generating new common goods, knowhow and social infrastructure that is useful in the long term.

The projects listed below show that the principle of intergenerational equity can be translated into concrete actions when firms and civil society organisations adopt a long-term vision based on shared social responsibility, regeneration of resources and enhancing people's capabilities. In this way, the private sector becomes a silent actor in building a fairer, more sustainable and inclusive future.

Fondazione Cariplo – Programmes for new generations
The Green Jobs Project, which started in 2015 and has been active for ten years has enabled upper secondary school students to undertake orientation programmes aimed at developing crosscutting skills linked to sustainability, stimulating the acquisition of soft skills and helping young people choose their own educational and professional future in the field of sustainability. The project has also involved other foundations belonging to the Sustainable Development Commission of ACRI, reaching in total 890 classes and 17,200 students for a total investment of over 3.7 million euro.

ENEL – Just Transition Framework
Enel, through the Energy Transition Roadmap platform, has planned actions and projects aimed at determining a new paradigm for a more sustainable and fairer energy transition, in line with the most effective decarbonisation strategies and long-term circular economy models, on the basis of the requirements of the Paris Agreement.

Etica Sgr – Responsible investment for future generations
Etica Sgr has as part of its own mission the promotion of funds oriented at mitigating risks and negative impacts on future generations, leveraging responsible intergenerational investments based on ESG criteria and, on the other hand, excluding sectors whose activities may harm future generations, such as the arms industry. The company promotes the growth of capital in the long term, supporting responsible business and virtuous practices, also through stewardship activities, such as dialogue with firms. The goal is to create sustainable and generational value, not only financial, but also social and environmental.

Koalisation
Koalisation is an Italian climate-tech startup founded in 2022 by young entrepreneurs active in the ESG field, which unites environmental sustainability and socioeconomic development, in a high-impact intergenerational model. For some years, with its evolution into a benefit corporation, Koalisation has accompanied firms in designing truly transformative long-term ESG policies, creating projects with a strong impact on the environmental ecosystem and on local communities. The most operational area at the moment is that of the carbon footprint, in which local communities are involved, especially in Africa, to prevent the use of charcoal, reducing its daily use by 70%, and accompanying coal producers in their transformation, moving from agents of the destruction of forests to guardians and regenerators, thanks to the union of frugal innovation and technology. More generally Koalisation's mission is to gradually involve best-in-class Italian businesses in projects designed to eliminate their environmental footprint over the medium to long term, by co-designing transformative high-impact actions, increasingly focused on optimising the ESG value chain and thus overturning the concept of greenwashing.

Conclusions and recommendations

The issue of the choices aimed at guaranteeing intergenerational equity is gradually becoming central, not only in the design of public policies and corporate strategies, but also in research. This Paper has highlighted how conceptual, legal and operational instruments have been developed that can translate this principle into current practices. Constitutional recognition of the interest of future generations, the approval of Law no. 167/2025 which imposes the Generational impact assessment (GIA) of new laws, European initiatives on intergenerational fairness, as well as GIA tests being used in a range of local contexts, head in this direction and indicate that **the design of fairer policies on the intertemporal level is possible and increasingly necessary**.

The UN Pact for the Future, adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2024, together with the related Declaration on Future Generations clearly indicate the path to follow, also in order to accelerate implementation of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and deeply transform the way in which public policies are designed and realised. **The Pact proposes a broad variety of actions**, identified also thanks to the work undertaken by the OECD and by the European Commission on strategic foresight, which range from the construction of early-warning systems capable of anticipating risks and identifying opportunities, up to structured involvement in the decision-making processes by civil society, not only as a stakeholder with diversified interests, but also a source of the expertise needed to increase the efficiency and, above all, the effectiveness of policies.

This Paper, in setting out the most advanced experiences in this field, in Italy and internationally, has also highlighted **a marked diversity in the approaches adopted so far**. These differences are clear starting from the identification of the "targets" of the assessment. In some cases, the target group is the current youth population in relation to the other coexisting generations (adults and older people). In other cases, instead, the subject of the analysis is the relationship between present and future generations. In the first case, therefore, the focus of the analysis is on existing imbalances, while in the second the focus is on anticipating and correcting potential future imbalances.

A second source of diversity derives from the concept of "justice" adopted and on which impact analyses focus. Alongside a largely utilitarian approach, in some cases (as stated also by Law no. 167/2025) justice is regarded as "equity", i.e. the obligation to guarantee future generations a quality of life "at least equivalent" to that of the current generation. In addition, some approaches highlight the need to guarantee future generations the possibility of developing their own essential capabilities, others focus on the environmental dimension, emphasising the ecological necessity to preserve natural capital.

These different conceptual approaches are also reflected in the "multiplicity of metrics" proposed and used. The definition of methodological instruments today is hampered by difficulties arising from a still limited range of experiences and reduced availability of data. While we know how to predict, albeit with high margins of error, most of the economic or demographic variables, there is still little experience on how to assess the impact of policies on other equally important phenomena from the intergenerational viewpoint regarding social and environmental areas.

Given the different approaches that can be followed, **Italy must decide how to construct its own GIA model, so as to make explicit the intergenerational effects of the policies being examined and put into practice**. Consequently, this first document has primarily sought to survey the current situation, pending further guidance from the European Commission. Current experiences show that it is not possible to immediately adopt a solution to then be applied unchanged over the years to come. On the contrary, **it is necessary to plan an operational and flexible approach that can be refined also on the basis of the experience gained in future years. However, it must be stressed that it is necessary to invest adequate resources now in the assessment processes and mobilise the individual and institutional professional skills that exist in Italy on this subject**.

In light of the issues covered briefly here we consider it extremely positive that Law no. 167/2025:

- enshrines the general principle that "the laws of the Republic shall promote intergenerational equity also in the interests of future generations";
- orients the GIA to assess "the environmental or social effects induced by laws that affect

young people and future generations, with particular attention to intergenerational equity", thus encapsulating both the aforementioned analytical perspectives, i.e. on the current young population and on the future one;
• although initially excluding decree-laws from the GIA obligation, nonetheless, requires it if "the regulatory act determines significant environmental or social effects on young people and on future generations";
• creates within the Prime Minister's Office the National Observatory for the generational impact of laws, with the goal of monitoring the real promotion of intergenerational equity between generations, and carrying out the analysis, study and proposal of possible instruments to define and implement the GIA.

While expressing a very positive assessment of the law, this Paper formulates a set of recommendations aimed not only at avoiding the GIA being reduced to a purely formal and bureaucratic requirement, but also offering the Government and Parliament indications to improve legislative processes with a view to intergenerational justice. This improvement is essential also to prevent the occurrence of constitutional disputes. **In addition, the Paper formulates recommendations aimed at other public and private-sector actors**, in order to accompany and promote the transformation of decision-making processes in the light of intergenerational justice.

However, it must not be overlooked that also **the private sector, the education system, the non-profit sector and civil society as a whole are called on to contribute to building and implementing a new intergenerational pact**, aimed at creating and protecting the various forms of capital – natural, human, social, economic and institutional – to be transmitted over time to the generations to come. Only through coordinated and coherent action will it be possible to transform the principle of intergenerational equity from a regulatory pronouncement to an everyday practice, and not just in the public sector.

1. Adopt GIAs as "permanent cognitive infrastructure" of the regulatory process and the design of policies

In the light of the international, European and national framework outlined, the Generational impact assessment cannot be understood as a sectoral or accessory instrument, but rather as **permanent cognitive infrastructure of the regulatory process and, more generally, the public decision-making process**. In this sense a purely youth-centred reading must be set aside in order to adopt an extended generational perspective that can assess the effects on the present and future cohorts over their life. In societies characterised by a marked demographic imbalance, **failing to adequately assess the generational impact of decisions leads to systematically underestimating the future implications of present decisions, not only in terms of costs, but also of missed opportunities**.

The Pact for the Future indicates numerous actions aimed at improving the decision-making process in order to correct this cognitive distortion to which today's decision-makers are subject, including the development of anticipatory governance, futures literacy, etc..[56] Therefore, to promote the transformation of decision-making processes, it is important to also invest in other instruments, so as to accelerate the transformative process of individual and collective decision-making.

2. Use GIAs as a lever to shift policies from a defensive to a generative approach

A distinctive element of the approach which is proposed in this Paper is **going beyond a purely defensive conception of intergenerational equity.** Alongside protecting against irreversible damage, the GIA should assess to what extent policies:

• broaden the capabilities of new generations;
• reduce the distance between potential and real choice possibilities;
• enhance the conditions for autonomy, participation and responsibility during their life.

In this sense, **the GIA can become a strategic instrument to orient public and private investments** to critical life stages (education, school-employment transition, access to housing, becoming a parent), helping to rebuild trust in the future, demographic and social, and therefore also economic sustainability. Intergenerational equity **must be understood not only as a criterion to reduce existing imbalances, but also as an enabling principle**, that can enhance the capabilities of new generations to face the challenges of their time[57].

56 See https://asvis.it/public/asvis2/files/Pubblicazioni/Futuro/Governance_Anticipante.pdf

57 For example, it means investing in: education and training, instruments to reduce educational and digital poverty, decent work, equal access to housing and services, participation and representation. At the same time, it means supporting active ageing, combatting social isolation and guaranteeing sustainable and inclusive welfare systems for all ages.

Intergenerational justice is not a zero-sum game: investing today in opportunities for young people contributes to the sustainability of the system in the long term and to the wellbeing of future generations. In this sense, **equity between generations is a collective investment, not a cost**.

3. Strengthen participation by citizens, especially young people, as a structural component of assessments

Best practices at international level show that the quality of the GIA improves when it is accompanied by **structured forms of generational participation that are representative and stable over time**.

The implementation of the law requires the involvement of all citizens, but represents above all a concrete instrument to bring young generations closer to politics and benefit from their assessment perspective, also on an analytical level.

Participation must not be understood as symbolic consultation, but as:

- a qualified informed contribution;
- co-design of policies;
- an instrument for the democratic legitimacy of long-term choices.

4. Guarantee the technical independence of the bodies identified as responsible for GIAs and equip them with adequate and qualified human resources and tools

To guarantee the maximum quality of the GIA to the structures responsible for carrying it out, technical independence must be guaranteed, obviously leaving the responsibility for taking decisions at the political level. Consequently, **it is important for these structures to issue clear guidelines on how to conduct assessments**, which must be updated on the basis of the experiences acquired in the initial stage of implementing the law.

In addition, it is essential **to launch specific training courses on the GIA aimed at managers and technical staff of the structures called on to carry out the assessment**, using and enhancing the experience already gained at the Scuola Nazionale di Amministrazione (SNA). T**raining should also be extended to the local administrations that are autonomously adopting the GIA**.

Finally, to guarantee full transparency and increase the reputation of the bodies competent for the GIA, **publication of assessments must be ensured in accessible and understandable formats**, so as to fuel an informed public debate on the laws being analysed.

5. Enhance Parliament's capacity to use the results of GIAs and to assess the intergenerational impact of amendments introduced during the legislative process

According to the provisions of Law no. 167/2025, the GIA must be arranged by the Government, must accompany the legislative text, and must be transmitted to Parliament. In light of the constitutional reform in 2022 which made changes to articles 9 and 41 with explicit reference to the interests of future generations, **it is important that Parliament strengthens its capacity to assess the constitutionality of the new laws**. To this end, it is recommended to plan the launch of specific training programmes on the GIA aimed at parliamentary officials as soon as possible.

In parallel, the **Parliamentary Budget Office**[58] **should assess** the adequacy of its analytical instruments to verify the coherence of public finance documents and the laws being analysed, above all the Budget Law, with the principle that "the laws of the Republic shall promote equity between generations" enshrined by the aforementioned Law.

6. Ensure the timeliness of GIAs, especially in the case of Decree-Laws

The timeliness of the GIA is a crucial element so that its results can effectively impact on the legislative process, both in the stage of deliberation by Cabinet and in the subsequent parliamentary examination. **This need is particularly relevant in the case of decree-laws** which cause "significant environmental or social effects on young people and future generations".

To avoid, in practice, the GIA having only a marginal role, as happens for the Regulatory Impact Analysis (RIA), **procedures must be adopted**

58 The PBO carries out analyses, checks and assessments regarding: macroeconomic and public finance forecasts and the macroeconomic impact of important legislative acts; in particular, it validates the Government's macroeconomic forecasts contained in planning documents; public finance trends, also by subsector, and compliance with budget rules; activation and use of some instruments envisaged by the new framework of European laws; sustainability of public finance in the long term; further relevant economic-financial themes for the purposes of the aforementioned activities, with particular attention to the dissemination of informative elements in the fields of the economy and public finance.

that can balance timeliness and accuracy. To this end, procedures could be defined broken down into a number of stages: the first based on a mainly qualitative assessment, the second on more quantitative estimates.

Whatever choice is made, **it is essential for the Observatory to define increasingly accurate process and impact indicators for each law** in order to allow comparative analyses depending on the subject being addressed, the instruments being used, etc. Before the adoption of such indicators and the possible publication of recommendations, it also seems opportune to have a structured and permanent discussion with experts in the subject and with the Consiglio Nazionale Giovani.

7. Promote the use of GIAs locally and facilitate the exchange of good practice among the various levels of government

The tests launched by municipalities and regions show that the GIA can be adapted to the various levels of government. Since many policies relevant for intergenerational equity are part of the responsibilities of local bodies, **it is essential to promote the dissemination of the GIA also at local level**. This requires the structural inclusion of intergenerational assessment in training programmes of the public administration at all levels. In addition, **the State should agree with local bodies the most suitable institutional forms to spread the practice of the GIA in accordance with shared models**, to avoid excessive diversification or the use of suboptimal models.

Finally, it seems opportune to create permanent fora to **facilitate the systematic exchange of good practices between local, national and EU levels of government**, aimed at the continuous improvement of instruments and assessment methodologies.

8. Strengthen the national information system and the ecosystem of data on childhood, adolescence and generational transitions

To carry out the GIA accurately, also through modelling, to monitor the evolution over time of intergenerational equity and to design evidence-based policies, it is essential to have a solid, continuous and integrated information base on life conditions, educational programmes and the transitions of children, adolescents, young adults and all generations. This requires **overcoming the current fragmentation of sources, including private ones, and strengthening the role of the National statistical system (Sistan) in this area**. It is considered essential also to introduce an intersectional approach that takes account of gender, local, and migratory background differences, so as to guarantee the availability of data to enable the assessment of the impact, including intergenerational impact, of policies on gender inequalities.

In particular, it is considered necessary:

- **to develop an integrated information ecosystem of data on children and adolescents**, valorising also the data produced by civil society;
- **to reorganise and integrate the statistical sources in longitudinal registers**, based on standard cohorts by birth date, which make it possible to follow over time the paths for education, training, entering, staying and leaving employment, as well as transitions between education, employment and inactivity;
- **to facilitate the integration of educational, training, employment and social data**, in respect of the guarantees to protect personal data, in order to enable long-term analyses on the effects of public policies and their differentiated impact between generations.

As the lead body of Sistan, **Istat should rapidly promote a stable place for reflecting on this subject open to civil society and the scientific community**.

9. Enhance the methodological basis of GIAs by building integrated models and indicators

So that the GIA is not reduced to a formal exercise, it is necessary to equip it with a number of methodological instruments, taking account of the orientations of the European Commission. The objective is not a deterministic forecast of the future, but an informed assessment of the alternatives available in conditions of uncertainty.

The Report **shows the need to invest significant resources to improve the existing models which are traditionally concentrated on economic variables, extending them to social and environmental dimensions**. Moreover, other models, which are not analysed here, already exist in Italy, as bodies and research centres exist which currently carry out impact analyses of public policies. It is therefore recommended that the **Ministry of University and Research (MUR) allocates adequate resources in order to promote improvement of the existing models**. In parallel, the Observatory envisaged by Law no. 167/2025

should promote a project to involve relevant public and private institutions, in order to improve the quality of the models and other instruments to carry out the GIA.

10. Consider the effect of mid- to long-term demographic trends in GIAs

Italy and the European Union are faced with a continuously evolving demographic situation, with significant implications for relations among generations and for the distribution of opportunities and resources between them. **The GIA cannot therefore be disassociated from mid to long-term demographic scenarios**, not only "underlying" scenarios (drawn up by Istat) based on the ongoing trends and on stochastic uncertainty, but also those which incorporate realisable and sustainable goals. In addition, it is necessary to regularly monitor, as happens for deficit and public debt trends, the country's path (of moving closer to or further away from these scenarios on the basis of the actions taken) year after year.

This approach favours also the possibility of assessing the differential effects of policies on numerically rising or falling cohorts and the implications of generational renewal on the labour market, on welfare and on fiscal sustainability. European experiences and existing analytical models show that policies which are apparently neutral in the short term can produce strong regressive effects in the long term, above all in contexts of **low fertility and accelerated population ageing**, as in Italy. The GIA should therefore make explicit such trade-offs, increasing the transparency of public choices.

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www.savethechildren.it

Ecosistema Futuro is a partnership created in May 2025 to put the future – or rather, futures – and long-term thinking at the heart of the country's cultural, political, economic and social debate. At the moment more than 60 organisations currently participate actively in the initiative.

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