

Preface

The COVID-19 pandemic has deeply disrupted our societies and economies. This disruption has also been strongly felt by our young people. Young people may be less at-risk in terms of developing severe physical health symptoms linked to COVID-19, but the medium- and long-term consequences of the crisis hit our young generation particularly hard. Having to navigate the economic and social fallout from the crisis, reduced employment and career prospects, and the risk of exclusion and poverty right at the outset of one's life, is not easy.

While future prospects remain uncertain, young people have displayed great resilience. They have shown true commitment to solidarity, and have not only withstood the challenges of this crisis, but helped in many ways. The myriad projects supported under European programmes such as Erasmus+ or the European Solidarity Corps are living proof of this commitment, as are all the young people that are active in national volunteer services or youth organisations. Our younger generations have shown that they are deeply engaged in bringing relief to those that need it most. Yet, illustrative examples are not enough to craft the policies we need. For that, we need hard evidence and systematic analysis.

The OECD report on *Governance for Youth, Trust and Intergenerational Justice: Fit for all Generations?* provides valuable insight into the experience of young people today – the challenges they face as well as what they need to thrive. Its broad evidence-base allows us to identify many good practices, but it also reveals that much remains to be done to empower our young. These practices teach us that we need to double down on our investment in social cohesion and solidarity. The evidence that backs them demonstrates that public governance is crucial in supporting young people's transition towards independent life. We need young people to be engaged and represented if public institutions are to retain their legitimacy and have a significant impact.

It calls for integrated governance to support our youth's transition to an autonomous life, acknowledging that gains in educational attainment, technological advancements and health outcomes have not always translated into more opportunities for young people. Crucially, the report raises the issue of young citizens' trust in government, their participation and representation. It illustrates how young people get involved both in institutionalised and non-institutionalised channels of political participation, prompting questions about legal frameworks, governance tools and capacities.

The report also raises questions related to resources and inter-generational solidarity. Given that OECD nations enjoy increasingly good life conditions and their inhabitants tend to live longer, the relative weight of older generations will increase, and so will their demand for resources. There is a need, therefore, to explore the magnitude of existing inequalities across generations, and to look for solutions.

This knowledge should reinforce our commitment to address the considerable challenges faced by many young people as part of our recovery plans. By joining forces in the analysis of the current problems, the Member States, the European Union, and the OECD reinforce our collective capacity to provide appropriate policy responses. The report clearly highlights the added value that a coherent, cross-sectoral and participatory youth strategy can provide in order to fulfil this task. It also shows, how new governance

tools such as impact assessments can help to integrate the concerns of young people more systematically in policy-making and intergenerational dialogue.

Investing in younger generations remains at the core of our action. We must work towards creating new opportunities – not just *for* them, but *with* them. As European Commissioner and Minister, we also deem it important to focus equally on the three core areas of the EU Youth Strategy Engage – Connect – Empower and to contribute continuously to each of them. Therefore, we are working to reinforce European Union programmes such as Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, so that they will be more widely accessible and inclusive. Through thousands of projects every year, these programmes enable young people to shape their own channels for civic participation and community-building.

We need to actively listen to our young people because there can be no justice without everyone's voice being heard.

Genuine dialogue between young people and decision makers and the achievement of the EU Youth Goals are our main objectives in taking the young people in Europe seriously. The OECD's work on youth empowerment and intergenerational justice will help us support and sustain this endeavour. We must consider the well-being of both living and future generations, integrating intergenerational considerations more systematically in strategy design and programming, building up strategic foresight capacity to integrate a longer-term perspective in policy making, encouraging dialogue, and increasing transparency and accountability about our policy choices.

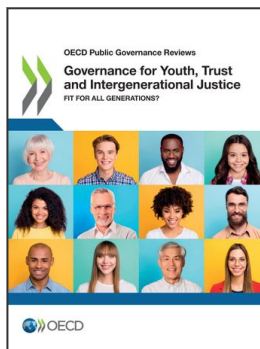
Best regards,



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From:

Governance for Youth, Trust and Intergenerational Justice

Fit for All Generations?

Access the complete publication at:

<https://doi.org/10.1787/c3e5cb8a-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2020), "Preface", in *Governance for Youth, Trust and Intergenerational Justice: Fit for All Generations?*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/be252825-en>

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