



A FUTURE GENERATIONS COUNCIL

A PROPOSAL ON INTERGENERATIONALLY EQUITABLE POLICY-MAKING FOR THE NEXT FEDERAL GOVERNMENT BASED ON THE ANALYSIS OF CONSTITUTIONAL LAW AND LEGAL JUSTIFICATION DEVELOPED BY PROF. DR HENRIKE VON SCHELIHA

The 21st parliamentary term of the German Bundestag will be decisive for the future of young people in Germany, particularly because their share of the total population continues to decline. By 2035, almost half of the population will be over 60 years old. The next federal government will therefore face fundamental challenges regarding intergenerational equity: it will have to protect the rights and freedoms of young people and, in particular, strengthen their opportunities for participation.

In its child and youth policy recommendations for the 21st parliamentary term, the Federal Youth Advisory Board, drawing on, among others, Prof. Dr Henrike von Scheliha's jurisprudential analysis, proposes to establish a Future Generations Council. This fact sheet outlines how such a council could and should be structured.

WHAT IS THE FUTURE GENERATIONS COUNCIL?

The Future Generations Council is an advisory body that integrates the interests of young and future generations into the political decision-making process. It is composed of 20–25 members under the age of 30, elected alternately by the Bundestag and the Bundesrat. Its task is to bring an intergenerationally equitable perspective into the legislative process and to critically examine the future consequences of political decisions.

OBJECTIVES

- Promote intergenerational equity in and through the legislative process
- Ensure that political decisions consider long-term impacts
- Strengthen democratic legitimacy by involving the younger generation
- Support sustainable and future-oriented legislation

TASKS AND COMPETENCIES

- **Advisory function:** Provide opinions on draft legislation with a focus on intergenerational equity
- **Mandatory consultation and reporting duty:** Mandatory consultation by the Bundestag coupled with an obligation to justify decisions that diverge from the recommendations
- **Suspensive veto power:** Power to refer laws back to committees for revision to achieve a more intergenerationally equitable solution

COMPOSITION

- 20–25 members under the age of 30
- Elected alternately by the Bundestag and Bundesrat based on applications
- Term of office: 4–5 years to ensure continuity, decoupled from the parliamentary term

- Democratic legitimacy through a transparent selection process
- No re-election permitted, to prevent a focus on short-term interests and staying in office

WHY IS A FUTURE GENERATIONS COUNCIL NEEDED?

- Demographic change: Young people are a shrinking minority and underrepresented in politics
- Long-term challenges: Climate protection, education, housing, social security and infrastructure all require intergenerational solutions
 - Lack of a future focus in today's decisions forces restrictions on future rights and freedoms
- Democratic stability: Not bringing the future into today's decisions threatens to erode democratic legitimacy
 - If political alternatives can no longer be realised because alternative policies have become unfeasible, periodic elections lose their importance
 - Trust in political parties and acceptance of the democratic process are dwindling

The Future Generations Council provides an institutional response to these structural challenges: ensuring that all generations have an equal opportunity to bring their concerns into the democratic process is key to substantively future-focused decision-making.

WHY IS A FUTURE GENERATIONS COUNCIL NEEDED NOW?

The current social and political transformations make intergenerationally equitable politics more urgent than ever.

- **Climate crisis:** Political decisions on environmental and climate protection have long-term effects that primarily impact the younger generation
- **The economy and social security:** Pension and social insurance systems are under pressure and the burden is being passed on to future generations

- **Infrastructure and housing:** In the future, adequate roads, hospitals, schools and electricity grids need to remain available nationwide so that people can live self-determined lives with freedom of choice
- **Democratic legitimacy:** A sustainable democracy requires that all generations are represented in decision-making processes. Without the voice of young people, there is a risk of a democratic deficit that could further weaken trust in politics

CONCLUSION

The introduction of a Future Generations Council is a necessary step to ensuring future-oriented, intergenerationally equitable policymaking. It would strengthen democracy, protect the interests of young and future generations and help to ensure the state's long-term capacity to act. The Federal Youth Advisory Board currently sees an opportunity for the next federal government to develop a detailed concept for a Future Generations Council and to begin its establishment during the 21st parliamentary term.

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THE FEDERAL YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD

The Federal Youth Advisory Board (FYAB; in German: Bundesjugendkuratorium/BJK) is an expert panel commissioned by the Federal Government. It advises the Federal Government on fundamental issues of child and youth services and cross-cutting issues in child and youth policy.

FYAB is composed of up to 15 experts from the spheres of politics, administration, associations and research. Its members are appointed by the Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth for the duration of the current legislative period.

<https://en.bundesjugendkuratorium.de/>



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