

Intergenerational Perspectives in Parliamentary Work

An ***intergenerational perspective*** is an analytical approach used to assess the long-term impacts of present-day policies on both future generations – those not yet born or currently too young to directly influence policy – and on the equitable treatment of generations living today, including youth, working-age adults, and older populations. It encourages decision-makers to consider how the outcomes of current legislative and policy processes will shape the life prospects, rights, and wellbeing of those who will inherit and live with the consequences of today's governance, whether they are young people growing into adulthood or generations yet to be born. This approach reflects an ethical commitment to steward society and the planet responsibly, so that all generations—present and future—can thrive under conditions that are ideally more just, sustainable, and equitable than those that exist today.

Though most often associated with environmental sustainability and climate policy, an intergenerational perspective is broadly relevant across legislative work. It can also be applied to economics, infrastructure investment, digital governance, and social policy, providing a lens to evaluate whether policies are resilient, forward-looking, and structured to provide lasting benefits. In practice, this requires the use of tools to assess the long-term impacts of decisions, as well as continuous and meaningful engagement with the youth of the present to ensure that they are involved in decisions that will shape their futures.

Why should parliamentary work be intergenerational?

Applying an intergenerational perspective in parliamentary work is both a democratic responsibility and a practical necessity, as laws and the allocation of resources shape the societal framework well beyond specific parliamentary mandates. By embedding this perspective into parliamentary processes, whether through impact assessments, foresight mechanisms, or oversight committees, parliaments can:

- ✓ prevent policy short-sightedness thus reducing the risk of long-term harm;
- ✓ promote policy coherence across sectors and generations;
- ✓ strengthen democratic legitimacy and public trust by showing accountability to current and future citizens; and
- ✓ enhance governance resilience, ensuring that systems are adaptive to emerging challenges.



Consequently, use of an intergenerational perspective equips parliaments to fulfil their duty as legislative agents of both present and future public interests, ensuring that progress today does not come at the expense of progress tomorrow. This is particularly relevant in an increasingly complex world where issues such as climate change, digital disruption, democratic shifts, and inequality intensify, placing greater pressures on governments to balance the diverse needs of coexisting generations—youth, working-age adults, and older populations—while safeguarding the prospects of those yet to come.

Intergenerational approaches are closely connected to **anticipatory governance**, as both seek to ensure that decision-making considers long-term consequences and prepares for future challenges:



- ✓ An intergenerational approach emphasizes fairness and responsibility across time, ensuring that today's decisions do not undermine the rights, resources, or wellbeing of younger and future generations.
- ✓ Anticipatory governance equips parliaments with tools and processes to systematically explore and respond to emerging trends and uncertainties. It enables legislators to proactively shape policy responses rather than react to crises after they unfold.

Collectively, these approaches promote a more resilient and future-aligned legislative process as intergenerational approaches provide an ethical foundation, while anticipatory governance supplies the practical mechanisms to realize that vision in decision-making, oversight, and institutional design. Consult ParlAmericas' tool on [Future Perspectives in Parliamentary Work](#) for more information.

Strategies for applying an intergenerational approach in legislative work

1. Facilitate ongoing and meaningful engagement with youth throughout the legislative process

Sustained, meaningful engagement with youth goes beyond standalone consultations, instead fostering **long-term dialogue and participation** through mechanisms like youth-focused parliamentary programming, ongoing youth inclusion in committee hearings, and efforts to co-create legislation. Meaningful engagement with youth builds civic trust, strengthens democratic legitimacy, and ensures that legislation reflects the priorities of younger and future generations. Furthermore, **including youth of diverse backgrounds** in decision-making processes is essential to ensure that policies apply an [intersectional lens](#) that reflects the varied realities and needs of all young people. Consulting youth of different genders, geographic locations, socio-economic statuses, abilities, and cultural identities will help parliaments address systemic inequalities and promote more inclusive and effective outcomes.



Example:

Youth parliaments, youth councils, and similar programs in parliaments across the Americas and the Caribbean provide a platform for young people to debate and share their perspectives on national issues and present recommendations directly to decisionmakers. Examples of youth engagement initiatives in parliament can be accessed via ParlAmericas' publication [Promoting Inclusion and Equality through Parliamentary Youth Programming](#).

2. Assess specific issues from an intergenerational lens

Parliaments can **evaluate how legislation affects various generations over time**, particularly in areas with long-term consequences such as climate policy, public finance, care policies, and social protection measures, as well as specifically highlight the importance of intergenerational equity within legislation. Capacity building for parliamentarians and parliamentary staff in intergenerational analysis and sustainability frameworks can support this shift.



Examples:

[Chile's Climate Change Framework \(Law 21.455\)](#) includes specific actions to contribute to intergenerational equity, such as the introduction of distinct mechanisms that require ongoing adaptation and revision of policies in light of evolving evidence, the mainstreaming of climate considerations into public planning and financial strategies to ensure that decisions align with the anticipated needs of future generations, and the creation of a Council for Climate Action that integrates youth voices and long-term planning into legislative review.

[Trinidad and Tobago's Vision 2030 National Development Strategy](#) outlines a long-term vision for a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable society by the year 2030, focusing on key pillars such as high-quality education, climate resilience, and economic equity. The Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago convened a Joint Select Committee on Vision 2030 to review and analyze the draft policy and consider and debate proposed recommendations prior to its approval.

[Uruguay's Generations Pact for Social Security Reform](#) was enacted through legislation in 2023 as a means to comprehensively overhaul the pension system with a view to long-term demographic shifts. This reform embeds an intergenerational approach by aligning contributions and retirement age with demographic shifts, seeking fiscal sustainability and fairness across current and future generations, while also considering impacts on those nearing retirement and a long-term transition over decades to the full implementation of developed measures.

3. Mandate intergenerational considerations in policies and legislations

Intergenerational approaches can be applied to specific pieces of legislation, or the **application of this lens can be mandated in the development or review of all legislation** to ensure the systematic consideration of the long-term interests of future generations before laws are enacted. Parliaments can require that the legislative frameworks of all major policy proposals include an analysis of their intergenerational consequences, or can champion laws that institutionalize such practices across sectors. Specific tools that can be drawn upon include:

- **Intergenerational impact assessments (IIAs):** These assessments can help identify long-term implications of proposed laws and policies across different age groups and generations.
 - ↳ The [Framework for Intergenerational Fairness](#) (School of International Futures) includes a detailed toolkit and checklist for conducting robust intergenerational assessments. .
- **Foresight and scenario planning:** These approaches help identify future risks, emerging trends, and possible disruptions, thus providing lawmakers with the strategic insight needed to craft forward-looking legislation.
 - ↳ The [UN Strategic Foresight Guide](#) (UN Futures Lab/Global Hub) and the publication [The Future is Ours: Strategic Foresight Toolkit – Making Better Decisions](#) (The School of International Futures and Save the Children) are two introductory resources that can provide more information on strategic foresight methodologies.



[The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s Anticipatory Governance Toolkit](#) and [UNDP’s The Use of Futures in Parliaments](#) are further tools that can be drawn upon to support parliamentarians in assessing and planning for long-term global risks and trends to promote transformative action. The materials offer practical guidance on better preparing for future challenges and developing resilient, future-ready institutions.

4. Integrate intergenerational approaches into committee work

Parliamentary committees can systematically include intergenerational perspectives in their deliberations, ensuring legislation considers long-term effects on both current and future generations. In addition to the use of the tools described above, committees can also ensure that their standard deliberative practices include consultation with youth and experts that can provide data or testimony on the diverse impacts of issues on current and future populations.



Example:

The parliaments of **Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay** have adopted **Committees of the Future** or similar bodies to institutionalize a forward-looking approach in their legislative processes. Through their focus on future considerations, innovation, and collaboration, these present a potential entry point for integrating an intergenerational approach into legislative work – with some of these specifically focusing on issues related to the rights of future generations. Learn more about their work on page 4 of the ParlAmericas brief on [Future Perspectives in Parliamentary Work](#).

5. Assess budget allocations from an intergenerational lens

Applying an intergenerational approach in budget review processes helps legislators assess and contribute to fiscal sustainability, so future generations are not overburdened with debt or underfunded systems. Access to transparent, long-range economic projections – whether provided through independent analysis or parliamentary and committee staff – also strengthens parliamentary oversight.



Example:

[Canada's Parliamentary Budget Officer \(PBO\)](#) is an independent parliamentary actor tasked with providing non-partisan, evidence-based analysis to support informed decision-making. The PBO assesses the financial and economic impacts of government policies, including their long-term implications for fiscal sustainability. A key aspect of their work is publishing long-term fiscal sustainability reports for parliamentarians, which give guidance on how current government spending, tax policies, and demographic trends will affect future generations.



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Checklist for applying intergenerational approaches

The following checklist is designed to support parliamentarians and parliamentary staff in systematically applying an intergenerational lens to their work. It offers practical questions and considerations to ensure that decisions made today reflect the rights, needs, and well-being of both current and future generations.

In your review of legislation...



Objective: *To ensure that laws promote long-term wellbeing and do not create unjust burdens for future generations.*

- ☐ What are the long-term impacts of this proposed legislation?
- ☐ Does the bill consider the rights and interests of future generations?
- ☐ Will this law create obligations or risks that future governments and citizens will struggle to manage?
- ☐ Are there sunset clauses,¹ review mechanisms, or adaptability measures built in to accommodate future changes?
- ☐ Has future-oriented evidence (e.g., foresight studies, scenarios, projections) been considered?
- ☐ Were youth or other experts with specific knowledge on the impact of this issue on individuals of different generations consulted in the development of the bill?

In your oversight role...



Objective: *To evaluate whether government policies and programmes are aligned with long-term interests, future thinking and whether there is anticipatory governance within parliamentary processes.*

- ☐ Are impact assessments (environmental, social, economic) considering long-term effects?
- ☐ Are there clear indicators for measuring progress across generations (e.g. well-being, equity, environmental health)?
- ☐ Do audit institutions or oversight bodies consider intergenerational equity in their evaluations?
- ☐ Could quantitative sources (e.g. statistics) be complemented by qualitative evidence from focus groups or oral testimonies?

In your assessment of budgets...



Objective: *To promote fiscal sustainability and ensure that today's spending does not undermine future economic stability.*

- ☐ Does the budget proposal contribute to long-term financial sustainability (e.g., debt, pensions, climate adaptation, technology)?
- ☐ Are intergenerational costs and benefits of public investments transparently assessed?
- ☐ Will future generations face disproportionate tax burdens or diminished services due to current decisions?
- ☐ Are resources being allocated to build long-term resilience (e.g., education, employment, infrastructure, climate adaptation)?
- ☐ Are further resources necessary to provide training to those responsible for implementing intergenerational policies or programs in line with human rights principles, justice and equity?

In your constituency representation role...



Objective: *To ensure that diverse voices, especially youth and marginalized communities, are included in shaping long-term decisions.*

- ☐ Have the views of younger people and future-focused stakeholders been included in consultations?
- ☐ Are participatory mechanisms facilitating meaningful engagement by underrepresented groups to voice concerns about long-term impacts?
- ☐ Does public communication around the issue acknowledge its relevance for future generations or differentiated impacts for members of older generations?
- ☐ Are intergenerational concerns reflected in constituency engagement and reporting?

¹ A *sunset clause* is a legal provision embedded within a legislation or regulation that sets an automatic expiration date (or termination) unless the legislature takes action to renew or extend it. After the specified period, the law ceases to have effect unless it is deliberately re-enacted.