

# Executive Summary

Youth today enjoy unprecedented access to information, education and technology. However, the repercussions of the global financial crisis in the late 2000s, the COVID-19 pandemic and global transformations such as population ageing, digitalisation, and rising inequalities have created uncertainties about the future young people and unborn generations face.

Public governance must be at the heart of the debate about the role of the state in creating an enabling environment for youth, trust and intergenerational justice. The report provides information on whether the existing legal, policy and institutional and decision-making arrangements deliver on the implicit promise that each generation will do better than the last.

This report is prepared based on the findings of a survey of 34 OECD member countries and the European Commission and eight selected non-member countries, as well as 81 youth organisations based in the participating countries. It provides a comparative analysis for:

- adopting a holistic governance approach to support youth in their transition to an autonomous life;
- increasing youth participation and representation in public life and their relationship with government; and
- integrating considerations of intergenerational fairness and justice in policy-making.

The analysis builds on the findings of the OECD Youth Stocktaking report (2018) to explore which governance tools work and which do not, and why. It sets benchmarks for cross-country comparisons in each area and provides innovative and practical insights for policy makers, civil society and young people to build a present and future that leaves no one behind.

## The transition of youth to an autonomous life has become more challenging

Despite the gains in educational attainment and health outcomes over recent decades, the transition to an autonomous life has become more difficult. Young people are 2.5 times more likely to be unemployed than people aged 25-64, have less disposable income than previous young generations, find it more challenging to afford housing and are more likely to work in insecure jobs.

When youth are not active in social life and the labour market, the costs for societies and economies are high. Their absence undermines social cohesion, productivity and the potential for inclusive growth. OECD data show that, on average across OECD, 1 in 10 youth aged 15-24 years was not in education, employment or training (NEET) in 2019, which represents an economic cost equivalent to between 0.9% and 1.5% of OECD GDP.

***To support youth in their transition to an autonomous life, governments should consider:***

- Formulating and investing in the quality of integrated youth strategies, at the appropriate level(s) of government, to ensure they are evidence-based, participatory and cross-sectoral, supported by political commitment, adequate resources, and effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.
- Equipping policy makers with adequate resources and skills and establishing effective co-ordination mechanisms to ensure a coherent delivery of youth policy and services across different ministries and levels of government.
- Reviewing age-based criteria to access public services and opportunities to participate in public life to create a legal environment that is conducive to youth engagement and empowerment.
- Facilitating young people's access to information and counselling in areas such as education, employment and health by providing public services online.
- Providing targeted policies and services for young women and men, especially the most vulnerable youth populations (e.g. NEET youth, young migrants; homeless youth and youth with disabilities).
- Systematically gathering age-disaggregated data, and applying regulatory and budgetary impact assessments to address inequalities within and across different age cohorts.

### Youth's trust, perception of having a say and representation have stalled

Since the global financial crisis in the late 2000s, youth's trust in public institutions and their perception of having political influence and representation in decision-making have stalled. At the same time, young people demonstrate strong motivation for addressing global challenges such as climate change, rising inequality, shrinking space for civil society and threats to democratic institutions.

***To strengthen youth's relationship with public institutions, governments should consider:***

- Reforming registration rules and lowering minimum age requirements to address barriers to youth participation in political life and promote age diversity in state institutions.
- Providing programmes to help young people join and thrive in the public sector workforce as well as programmes for inter-generational learning between older and younger employees.
- Engaging youth stakeholders in a meaningful way in policy design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation to ensure age-diversity in public consultations and more responsive and inclusive policy outcomes, through in-person as well as digital means.
- Strengthening volunteering and youth work through national laws, strategies and programmes that include a common vision and clear responsibilities, co-ordinated action, and adequate resources for building youth's skills and competencies as well as social cohesion and societal resilience.
- Exploring the co-creation of innovative mechanisms to engage with non-institutionalised youth activism and recognise its important contribution to the political discourse.

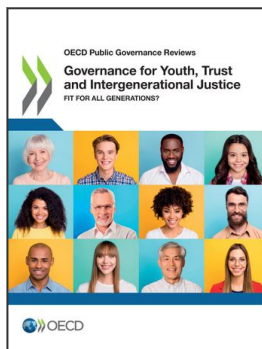
## Ageing and COVID-19 raise questions about intergenerational justice

Population ageing across OECD countries is decreasing the share of young voters, scaling up pension obligations, and raising the demand for health care and other social care services. Concerns about fairness between generations increasingly permeate social, fiscal and environmental public policy debates and are likely to gain further traction in the context of addressing COVID-19.

In response, OECD countries have created new institutions, laws, policies and public management tools to integrate the concerns of today's youth and future generations more systematically in policy-making and encourage intergenerational dialogue and solidarity.

### ***To foster intergenerational justice the context of ageing societies, governments should consider:***

- Demonstrating strong political commitment to act upon inequalities both within and between different age cohorts and address intergenerational challenges.
- Integrating intergenerational justice considerations in laws, policies strategies and programmes and promote co-ordination across government to ensure policy coherence.
- Creating or strengthening oversight institutions/mechanisms to monitor intergenerational justice commitments by ensuring resources and their legal, financial and political independence.
- Ensuring policy makers are aware and have the right skills and public management tools to promote intergenerational justice in policy-making, public spending and decision-making.
- Promoting age diversity in public life and decision-making.



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