

Wellbeing for Future Generations

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Table of content

Executive summary	4
"Denmark and the Nordics have a unique opportunity" Commentary by Sophie Howe, the world's first Future Generations Commissioner (Wales)	5
Introduction How do we secure wellbeing for future generations?	6
Global momentum UN agreements on future generations	8
The EU agenda EU Commissioner for Intergenerational fairness	10
Governance for Future Generations How do governments prioritise wellbeing for future generations?	12
The Welsh case "The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015"	18
Potentials and risks What are the perspectives of prioritizing wellbeing for future generations in a national context?	20
References	22

Executive summary

This report explores how governments can secure wellbeing for future generations. The report's relevance is underscored by the commitment of world leaders to safeguard the needs and interests of future generations, as reflected in the adoption of the UN's 'Pact for the Future' and 'Declaration for Future Generations' in September 2024.

The key messages of the report are summarized below:

Global commitment to future generations

On 22 September 2024, UN member states formally adopted the Pact for the Future and the Declaration for Future Generations at the UN Summit in New York. This milestone elevates the agenda to an official and binding UN priority, underscoring its global significance and building on a cause already deeply rooted in many cultures.

Strengthened ambition in the EU

In the same month, the EU announced the creation of a Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness. The role is tasked with integrating the interests of future generations into EU legislation and policy development—reinforcing long-term thinking and evidence-based policy-making at the highest level.

Countries already taking the lead

A number of countries have already taken meaningful steps. Since 2015, Wales has implemented the Well-being of Future Generations Act, which obliges public bodies to factor long-term impacts on health, environment, and prosperity into decision-making processes. Similar institutions and frameworks exist in countries like Finland, New Zealand, and Hungary.

Rethinking institutions and accountability

The report highlights the need to rethink how public goals are defined and enforced. National wellbeing indicator frameworks—moving beyond GDP—can serve as ethically grounded tools for setting long-term objectives. At the same time, legal mechanisms and dedicated institutions (e.g. commissioners, ombudspersons, or parliamentary committees) are essential for ensuring implementation and accountability.

Policy instruments for future-oriented decision-making

Emerging approaches such as Strategic Foresight, System Dynamics Modelling, and Social Multi-Criteria Analysis enable a more nuanced understanding of long-term consequences, value pluralism, and the dynamics of complex systems. Such approaches are essential for designing policy solutions that genuinely address the wellbeing of future generations.

Significant potential—but no quick fixes

The Nordic countries are well-positioned to lead on this agenda. Ambitious implementation could support a more just and successful green transition while fulfilling international commitments under the Pact for the Future. However, realising this potential requires more than declarations. Without concrete action, strong institutions, and political will, the opportunity may be lost—and the agenda reduced to rhetoric rather than reform.

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Denmark and the Nordics have a unique opportunity

Denmark and the Nordic countries, renowned for their strong traditions of welfare, equity and accountability, are uniquely positioned to build a secure and sustainable society where future generations will not only survive but thrive. By seeking an ambitious implementation of the UN's "Declaration for Future Generations", you can help ensure that those yet to be born will not have to bear the consequences of insufficient action today. We owe that to them.

Fulfilling this commitment requires systematic integration of long-term thinking and accountability across critical areas, including climate change, environmental protection, social equity, and technological development. A bold and determined approach to implementation will be essential to meet this challenge.

In Wales, the 'Well-being of Future Generations Act' has equipped politicians and institutions with a practical framework for long-term thinking, enabling them to assess how today's decisions impact both current and future generations. Denmark and the Nordics now have a unique opportunity to adapt and apply similar approaches within their own contexts, securing the wellbeing of generations to come.



Sophie Howe
The world's first Future
Generations Commissioner
(Wales, 2016–2023)

Introduction

How do we secure wellbeing for future generations?

Purpose of the report

The wellbeing of future generations is under serious threat from global challenges such as climate change, rising inequality, unregulated technological development, poverty, and biodiversity loss.

This report examines how the wellbeing of future generations can be *secured* — that is, how it can be prioritised, institutionalised, and enforced at the national level. While the analysis is grounded in a Danish and Nordic context, its findings and recommendations hold relevance for governments and institutions worldwide.

Key concepts

Two central concepts underpin this report: *future generations* and *wellbeing*. These are defined as follows:

Future generations: All generations yet to exist, who will inherit this planet. (Based on the UN's Declaration for Future Generations).

Wellbeing: A multidimensional condition that requires the fulfilment of various interrelated needs in order to enable a good life. These dimensions include material living standards, health, education, personal activities, governance and political voice, social relationships, environmental quality, and physical and economic security.

Wellbeing for future generations: For future generations to thrive in accordance with the definition above, today's societies must operate within the planet's ecological boundaries. This implies combining long-term and systems-based thinking with a holistic understanding of human wellbeing.

Global momentum

There is growing international recognition of the need to prioritise the wellbeing of future generations. Global institutions and national governments are taking concrete steps:

UN: At the *Summit of the Future* in September 2024, UN member states adopted the *Pact for the Future* and the accompanying *Declaration for Future Generations*. These texts reinforce the responsibility of current generations to safeguard the rights and wellbeing of future ones, and call for the adoption of metrics beyond GDP, the integration of Strategic Foresight, and stronger reliance on science and data in long-term policymaking.

EU: Among the new EU Commissioners appointed in 2024, a post dedicated to intergenerational fairness has been created. The Commissioner's mandate is to ensure that EU policies are designed to protect—not undermine—the living conditions and opportunities of future generations.

OECD: The OECD has launched the WISE Centre (Wellbeing, Inclusion, Sustainability, and Equal Opportunity), which supports member countries in promoting long-term wellbeing. The centre develops indicators and policy tools that balance economic, social, and environmental dimensions—and considers the wellbeing of both current and future generations.

National level: Countries such as Wales, New Zealand, Finland, and Scotland have made significant progress in legislating and establishing institutions aimed at promoting the wellbeing of future generations.

We borrow environmental capital from future generations with no intention or prospect of repaying. They may damn us for our spendthrift ways, but they can never collect on our debt to them. We act as we do because we can get away with it: future generations do not vote; they have no political or financial power; they cannot challenge our decisions.

– Our Common Future [The Brundtland report], 1987.

Global momentum

UN 'Pact for the Future'

At the UN 'Summit of the Future' (2024), the global community adopted a 'Pact for the Future', committing world leaders to accelerate efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The UN's priority of future generations

This is not the first time the UN has adopted a declaration referencing future generations:

- **Stockholm Declaration (1972):** "The natural resources of the Earth, including the air, water, land, flora, and fauna ... must be safeguarded for the benefit of present and future generations ..."
- **Rio Declaration (1992):** "... development must proceed in a manner that equitably ensures the developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations."

Building on Our Common Future [The Brundtland Report], the UN Secretary-General António Guterres released the report 'Our Common Agenda' in 2021. This report marked the first step toward the Pact for the Future, placing the wellbeing of future generations at the core of the UN mission.

While the UN has taken steps before, timely action by nation-states could have mitigated today's challenges. In 1972, "future generations" included most people alive today. It is now up to nation-states to deliver on the ambitious implementation they have committed to.

The pact is built on five pillars:

1. **Sustainable development:** This pillar builds on the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda, emphasising the need to create sustainable economies and societies capable of long-term viability. It highlights the importance of equitable access to resources and opportunities for all.
2. **International Peace and Security:** The pact proposes the most significant reform of the UN Security Council since the 1960s, aiming to enhance representation and efficiency in international security matters. It also emphasizes renewed focus on peacekeeping and conflict prevention.
3. **Science, Technology, Innovation, and Digital Cooperation:** The pact's annex, the Global Digital Compact, aims to ensure that digital and technological advancements promote human well-being and respect for human rights. It also emphasizes regulating artificial intelligence and other advanced technologies to prevent misuse and enhance digital security.
4. **Youth and Future Generations:** This pillar focuses on intergenerational fairness and the rights of future generations. It emphasizes both the inclusion of youth in decision-making processes and the protection of future generations' rights, encapsulated in its own annex, the Declaration for Future Generations.
5. **Transforming Global Governance:** To enable the UN and other multinational organizations to address current and future challenges, the pact includes reform plans to make UN bodies, such as the Security Council, more representative, fair, and effective.

Global momentum

UN ‘Declaration for Future Generations’

The fourth pillar of the Pact focuses on ensuring representation and protection for children, youth, and especially future generations. Particular emphasis is placed on future generations, with a dedicated annex, the “Declaration for Future Generations.”

National governments hold primary responsibility

The ‘Declaration for Future Generations’ emphasises prioritising the rights and interests of future generations through a set of articulated principles, obligations, and actions. The declaration underscores that the primary responsibility for implementation lies within individual national governments and outlines several actions, including:

- Utilizing science, data, and ‘Strategic Foresight’ to ensure long-term planning and sustainable, evidence-based decision-making.
- Ensuring inclusive and equitable access to knowledge, promoting innovation and critical thinking.
- Strengthening national and global metrics, including developing new sustainability goals that move beyond GDP (Beyond GDP).
- Investing in capacity to manage global crises, with a focus on protecting the most vulnerable.
- Promoting integrated government approaches to ensure that the needs and interests of future generations are embedded in policy development.
- Strengthening collaboration with civil society, academia, and the private sector to foster long-term solutions and ensure intergenerational partnerships.

Next steps

The UN Secretary-General will appoint a Special Representative for Future Generations with the following responsibilities:

- Represent and advocate for the interests of future generations within the UN and other international forums.
- Support member states in understanding the long-term consequences of current decisions through knowledge sharing, national examples, and research.
- Facilitate collaboration and exchange of experiences between institutions and networks, including at the local level.
- Assist member states in integrating long-term thinking into political decision-making processes and building capacity.
- Promote the use of ‘Strategic Foresight’ and understanding of future risks and opportunities.
- Report to the UN General Assembly or a dedicated forum.

In addition, as outlined above, the UN calls on member states to ensure that the interests of future generations are safeguarded and to preserve their ability to effectively enjoy their human rights.

The EU agenda

EU Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness

During a speech to the European Parliament in Strasbourg in July 2024, President-designate Ursula von der Leyen signalled a notable change in priorities by proposing the creation of a Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness. The role was officially established just two months later, in September 2024.

The Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness will serve as a bridge-builder, drawing heavily on the existing work on 'Strategic Foresight' carried out in the EU, as well as the Commission's cross-cutting focus on citizen engagement and participation, including the use of a European citizens' panel.

For our young people, 2030, 2040, 2050 is around the corner. They know that we have to reconcile climate protection with a prosperous economy. And they would never forgive us if we do not rise to the challenge. So, this is not only a matter of competitiveness, but also a matter of intergenerational fairness. The young people deserve it.

– Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission

The Role of the EU Commissioner

According to Ursula von der Leyen's Mission Letter, the central tasks of the Commissioner will involve:

Developing a strategy for intergenerational fairness that focuses on: (a) Strengthening communication across generations, and (b) Ensuring that the interests of present and future generations are incorporated into the development of policies and legislation.

Integrating the interests of future generations into the existing 'Strategic Foresight' work conducted by the Commission, including the annual 'Strategic Foresight Report' and the EU-based 'Foresight Network'.

Using Strategic Foresight to identify trends, research, and technological developments that, in addition to influencing our economies and societies, also impact future generations.

Assessing the impact of current policies on future generations and ensuring that political decisions take future generations into account. This involves strengthening evidence-based and future-oriented policy development.

62% of the people in G20-countries are extremely or very worried about the state in which we will leave nature for future generations



Governance for future generations

How to prioritise the wellbeing for future generations

An ambitious implementation of the Declaration for Future Generations calls for a reevaluation of governance structures and policy-making.

Political goals and protection of future generations' wellbeing

A political system and public administration that genuinely prioritise the wellbeing of future generations will differ significantly from today's prevailing models. It will require fundamental changes to how policies are developed and decisions are made, as well as a redefinition of the societal goals we pursue and the benchmarks we use to measure success and value. In short, both our objectives and our methods must evolve to reflect long-term responsibility and intergenerational fairness.

- 1. Goals – Government objectives for the wellbeing of future generations:** Although future generations cannot vote or directly participate in today's decision-making processes, their interests can still be actively integrated into policy and governance frameworks. Such principle is far from new – many Indigenous cultures around the world have long embraced norms and values, such as the “Seventh Generation Principle,” which require that decisions account for their long-term impact on generations yet to come. If we understand the wellbeing of future generations as the obligation to ensure that their fundamental needs are met, then these needs can be made visible—and measurable—within Western political and administrative systems. Through the development of indicator frameworks, it becomes possible to set political goals that are aligned with sustainability and long-term responsibility, moving beyond narrow measures of success like GDP growth (see page 14 for more).
- 2. Means – Institutions and laws safeguarding future generations:** To ensure that the wellbeing of future generations is genuinely prioritized, mechanisms are needed to distribute power and ensure the enforcement of national objectives. This can be achieved by introducing legislation that enforces legally binding commitments and by establishing independent institutions dedicated to safeguarding long-term goals. Such institutions may vary in form and function, but their core purpose is to support public authorities in upholding national objectives and to advise policymakers on how to design laws and policies that reflect the interests of future generations (see page 15 for more). They can serve as watchdogs, foresight bodies, advisory councils, or accountability mechanisms—ensuring that commitments are not merely aspirational but enforceable.

The following pages explore these mechanisms in greater depth and provide a comparative analysis of how different national governments have implemented them to varying degrees. The analysis reveals considerable variation across countries and notes that it remains rare to see strong institutions and binding legislation combined in a fully integrated approach. While other efforts—such as educational initiatives—are undoubtedly important for promoting intergenerational awareness, this report focuses specifically on political and governance mechanisms capable of structurally embedding long-term responsibility into public decision-making.

33%

of the people in G20-countries agree that their government is doing enough to tackle climate change and environmental damage.

Governance for future generations

Government objectives for the wellbeing of future generations

Measurable indicators offer a foundation for setting political objectives and embedding wellbeing into policymaking. However, they also raise fundamental questions about how to translate the wellbeing of future generations into metrics that are both actionable and ethically sound.

Defining and assessing the wellbeing of future generations

Future generations will enter the world with their own aspirations and goals, which they will pursue to the best of their abilities. While these aspirations cannot be predicted, we can ensure that the necessary frameworks and resources are in place to allow them to pursue their goals freely, responsibly, and in full alignment with human rights.

Many of the economic analyses currently used to support political decision-making and policy prioritisation rely on marginalist models. These models typically begin from the status quo and focus on the preferences and behaviours of the present generation. Their primary function is to assess the effects of small, incremental changes within a given set of assumptions. However, such approaches quickly fall short when applied to large-scale structural transformations or long-term challenges.

Since the publication of the Brundtland Report in 1987, the protection of future generations' wellbeing has increasingly been tied to need-based theories, which offer an ethically robust foundation for intergenerational policymaking. Two of the most influential theoretical frameworks in this area are the capabilities approach (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2000) and the theory of universal human needs (Max-Neef, 1991; Doyal & Gough, 1991). These frameworks emphasise what people require in order to live meaningful and flourishing lives, and are not contingent on preferences or short-term utility.

National indicator frameworks for wellbeing

According to the OECD, over 70% of member countries now use national indicator frameworks to measure wellbeing. These frameworks move beyond conventional economic metrics like gross domestic product (GDP), focusing instead on core human needs such as health, education, community, and environmental sustainability. Increasingly, countries are using these indicators not only to track societal progress but also to set national priorities, assess the potential impacts of policy measures, and inform budget allocations.

Approaches to wellbeing measurement vary. Some countries focus primarily on the current population's quality of life, while others—such as Wales and New Zealand—have adopted more explicit strategies to account for the needs and opportunities of future generations. These countries use their wellbeing frameworks not only as monitoring tools, but also as instruments to promote long-term thinking and intergenerational responsibility in governance.

Governance for future generations

Institutions and laws safeguarding future generations

Setting political goals for the wellbeing of future generations is essential—but goals alone will not suffice. To ensure that these commitments lead to real-world impact, they must be underpinned by robust legal frameworks and dedicated institutions. Such mechanisms are crucial for embedding long-term interests into political and administrative processes—and for holding present-day decision-makers accountable.

Constitutional protections for future generations

In 14 EU countries, the rights of future generations are explicitly recognized in their constitutions, empowering courts to hold policymakers accountable for their responsibilities toward future citizens. A prominent example is the landmark German case *Neubauer et al. v. Germany*, where the Federal Constitutional Court ruled that national climate goals must account for the right of future generations to a secure and sustainable future.

The role of dedicated institutions

Dedicated institutions also play a pivotal role in protecting the wellbeing of future generations. These include politically dependent bodies, such as committees under government ministries in Finland and the United Kingdom, as well as politically independent entities like ombudspersons in Hungary and the Netherlands or advisory councils in Scotland and Singapore. Wales exemplifies a more comprehensive approach, where the *Well-being of Future Generations Act* establishes legal obligations for public institutions and is overseen by a Future Generations Commissioner.

Policy instruments for addressing intergenerational challenges

Conventional economic tools, which rely on static “all else equal” assumptions, are poorly equipped to address the complexities of long-term and intergenerational challenges. Alternative methodologies offer more nuanced approaches for addressing the impacts of today’s decisions on future generations, including:

- **Strategic Foresight** is a structured and systemic method for exploring and preparing for potential future scenarios. It involves leveraging collective intelligence to shape a desirable future. Strategic Foresight does not predict the future but instead examines multiple potential scenarios, exploring the opportunities and challenges they may present. This enables decision-makers to act proactively to influence future outcomes.
- **System Dynamics Modelling** is a method for understanding and simulating the behaviour of complex systems over time. By mapping feedback loops, delays, and interdependencies, it allows policymakers to test how different decisions and external shocks might influence long-term outcomes
- **Social Multi-Criteria Analysis** combines quantitative and qualitative evaluation to support decision-making in contexts of value pluralism and social complexity. It explicitly incorporates the perspectives of diverse stakeholders and ethical considerations, making it well-suited for policies that must balance present and future needs.

Governance for future generations

Institutionalisation of government objectives and safeguards

As outlined, two foundational components are central to effectively prioritising the wellbeing of future generations: 1) clearly defined government objectives that anchor the needs of future generations within policy frameworks and 2) robust institutional mechanisms to ensure these objectives are safeguarded and enforced.

Figure 2 presents an analytical framework positioning selected countries according to their progress in adopting these two approaches.

Government objectives:

National wellbeing frameworks (vertical axis)

Several countries have integrated national wellbeing frameworks to systematically monitor societal progress—and in several cases, these frameworks actively influence policymaking and public administration. Typically, they track dimensions such as basic needs, health, quality of life, social inequality, and environmental and climate impacts, in line with OECD recommendations following Stiglitz et al. (2009). We distinguish between three levels of use:

1. **No or passive use:** No national wellbeing framework is applied, or existing frameworks are not meaningfully integrated into policymaking or public governance.
2. **Active use:** The framework is actively used to set political objectives, assess the potential impacts of proposed policies, and/or guide budgetary decisions.
3. **Active use with explicit consideration of future generations:** The framework is actively applied with a deliberate focus on the wellbeing and needs of future generations

Safeguards:

Institutions safeguarding future generations (horizontal axis)

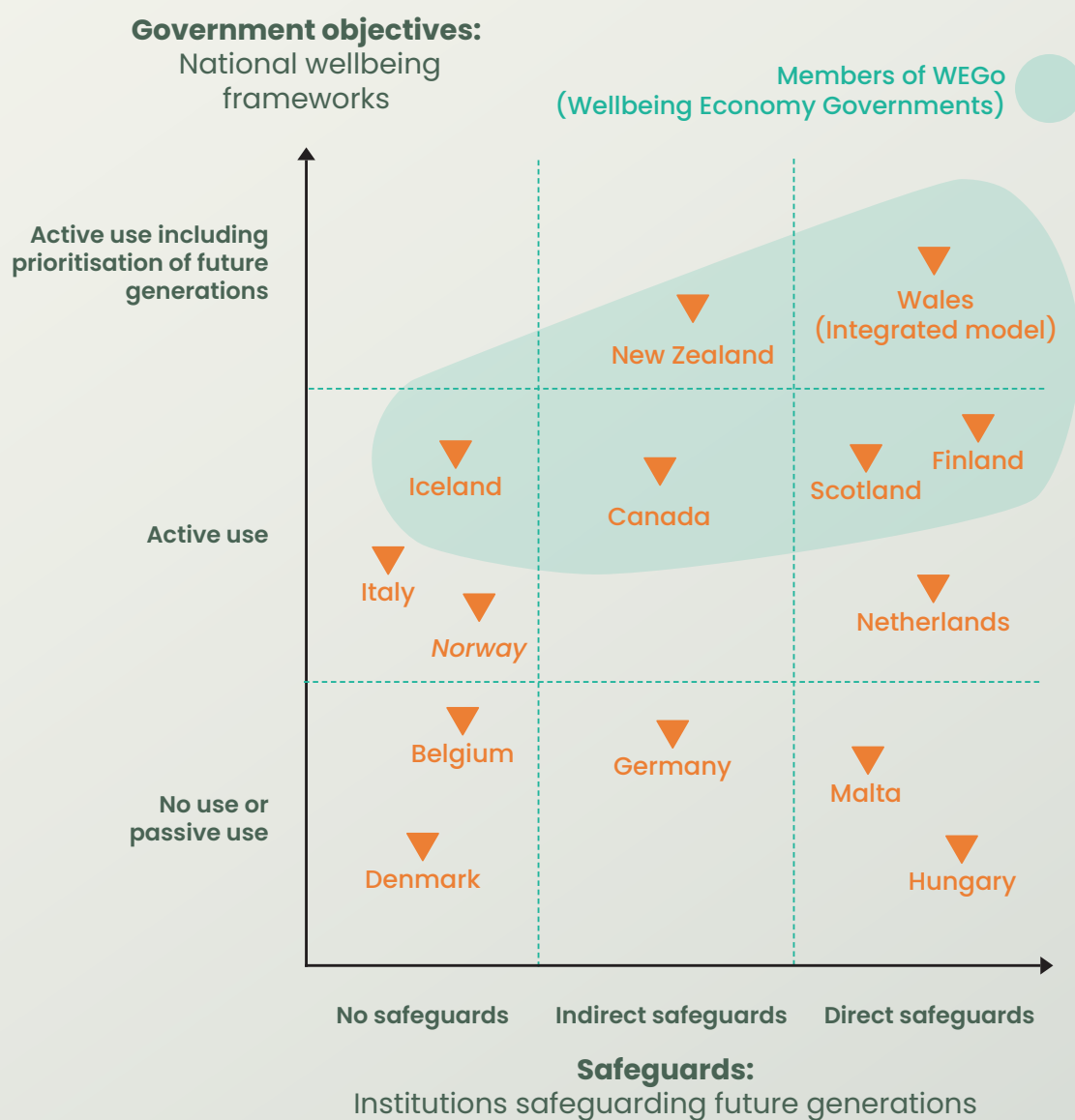
Several governments have established specialised institutions to safeguard the needs of future generations. These institutions take on a variety of roles, ranging from providing policy advice to overseeing the enforcement of legislation. Examples include commissioner roles (Wales), parliamentary committees (Finland), ombudspersons (Hungary), and advisory bodies (Scotland and Singapore). This analysis distinguishes between three levels of institutional safeguards:

1. **No safeguards:** No institution exists with a mandate—direct or indirect—to consider the interests of future generations.
2. **Indirect safeguards:** Institutions are mandated to work on broader sustainability objectives, which may consider responsibilities related to future generations, but without explicit focus.
3. **Direct safeguards:** Institutions have a clearly defined mandate to safeguard the rights and interests of future generations and/or address issues of intergenerational justice as a core function.

The figure highlights Wales as a standout example, as political objectives are integrated with the protection of future generations through enforcement mechanisms under the ‘Well-being of Future Generations Act’ and the oversight of the ‘Future Generations Commissioner’.

Governance for future generations

Figure: Use of national wellbeing frameworks and institutions safeguarding future generations (in selected western countries)



About the figure: The figure is based on original analyses as well as data and insights from Roman, P., & Dethier, F. (2024); Dirth, E., & Kormann da Silva, N. (2022); and Mahoney, J. (2023). The relative positioning of countries does not represent quantitative differences in priorities. Importantly, decision-making based on principles (e.g., Indigenous peoples' "Seventh Generation Principle") is possible without the use of indicator frameworks. However, the figure focuses on a contemporary Western context.

Norway's position in the figure is provisional and based on the current draft of the country's forthcoming *National Strategy for Quality of Life*. As the strategy has not yet been finalised or formally adopted, Norway's placement may be subject to revision as the framework develops.

The Welsh case:

The Well-being of Future Generations Act

In 2015, the Welsh Government enacted the Well-being of Future Generations Act — a pioneering piece of legislation rooted in the principle of meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs.

The Act establishes seven legally binding well-being goals that require public authorities to adopt a long-term perspective, engage with citizens, and collaborate widely. These national goals aim to create: (1) a prosperous, (2) healthy, (3) equal, (4) resilient, (5) culturally rich, (6) cohesive, and (7) globally responsible Wales.

Ministers are obligated to evaluate progress towards these goals using 50 national indicators and to establish “national milestones” to assess progress comprehensively.

A total of 44 public bodies are required to align their objectives with these wellbeing goals, taking all reasonable steps to achieve them. Public Service Boards have also been created in each local authority area to develop well-being plans tailored to local needs.

The Act outlines five statutory ways of working that public bodies must adhere to. These approaches emphasize long-term planning, prevention, collaboration, integration, and citizen involvement in decision-making processes. A central aim of the Act is to dismantle traditional silos between policy areas to foster holistic governance.

To support implementation, the Act created the role of the Future Generations Commissioner, an independent body charged with advising and assisting public institutions in achieving the wellbeing goals. The Commissioner provides analysis, guidance, and practical tools—and holds the authority to publicly challenge institutions when performance falls short. Each year, the Commissioner issues recommendations for improvement, and public bodies must either act upon them or publicly explain why they have not.

To fulfill the Act’s objectives of ensuring wellbeing for present and future generations, innovative approaches have become indispensable. Two key working methods are Strategic Foresight and a social multi-criteria approach. Strategic Foresight focuses on identifying emerging trends and exploring potential future scenarios to inform long-term decision-making. A Social Multi-Criteria Approach emphasizes balancing diverse considerations (e.g. diverse human needs) and navigating competing priorities to ensure that all wellbeing goals are addressed holistically and equitably.

The Welsh case:

Highlighted outcomes

Suspension of future road-building plans

The Act played a pivotal role in the Welsh Government's decision to halt the planning of a new motorway that would have disrupted sensitive wetland ecosystems. Instead, nearly all planned road network expansions were canceled to reduce the nation's climate footprint and prioritise the wellbeing of future generations. This decision marked a significant step toward a more sustainable transport policy in Wales, with a focus on investments in public transportation and cycling infrastructure over new road construction.

Democratic investment in renewable energy

As part of its commitment to the Act, Wales has launched 'Trydan Gwyrdd Cymru', a publicly owned renewable energy company. Revenues generated are reinvested into initiatives that benefit both current and future generations. Decisions on how to allocate profits—whether for flood adaptation or preventative measures—are made through citizen engagement processes. This model reflects a democratic and inclusive approach to sustainable development, fostering accountability and public ownership of long-term climate goals.

Public health strategy addressing social inequality

The Act has significantly influenced the national public health strategy in Wales, which now takes a holistic view of health and its social determinants. This strategy prioritizes mental health, physical activity, and, crucially, the reduction of social inequalities. By addressing root causes such as poverty, unemployment, and unequal access to education, the strategy aligns public health goals with broader societal objectives, ensuring a foundation for long-term well-being.

A new national curriculum

Wales has introduced a new national curriculum that emphasizes long-term thinking, sustainable behavior, and mental health. Aligned with the Act's wellbeing goals, the curriculum equips young people to make sustainable decisions while addressing climate and societal challenges in education. This forward-looking approach fosters resilience and sustainability awareness among future generations.

Circular economy

Wales has become a global leader in waste management and recycling, achieving a household recycling rate of approximately 65 %, ranking among the highest in Europe. Inspired by the Well-being of Future Generations Act, Wales has implemented ambitious recycling and waste reduction targets. These successes result from initiatives that simplify recycling for citizens and a focused effort to minimize waste across the production chain.

Potentials and risks

Perspectives on prioritizing the wellbeing of future generations in a national context

Potentials

A window of opportunity: For decades, scientists, citizens, and international bodies—like the UN—have called for urgent climate action. By placing the wellbeing of future generations at the heart of political priorities, the green transition can be redefined as a human-centered, actionable mission rather than a distant or abstract goal.

Catalytic impact: While the declaration offers legitimacy and direction, its real impact depends on national uptake. Countries that move first can set powerful precedents and inspire global momentum.

Nordic leadership: While Wales leads the agenda, its structural constraints create an opportunity for others. The Nordic countries have a unique opportunity to advance the agenda and shape a new model of global leadership on intergenerational justice.

Revitalised SDGs: The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) already enjoy broad support and institutional buy-in. The ‘Pact for the Future’ aims to accelerate these commitments by leveraging existing structures while introducing a renewed focus on long-term sustainability.

Institutionalised long-term thinking: By establishing measurable goals and enforceable mechanisms, governments can embed the wellbeing of future generations into the core of public governance—making it an enduring driver of policy design and evaluation.

Risks

A wasted moment: If the current momentum behind the Pact is not translated into action, a historic opportunity for systemic change may be lost—with no guarantee of a similar political window reopening.

Political volatility: Without legal safeguards and independent institutions, the agenda risks being diluted or derailed by short-term political interests and shifting electoral priorities.

Superficial implementation: If the wellbeing of future generations is poorly defined or politically sidelined, it risks becoming a symbolic add-on—rather than a guiding principle for transformative change.

Methodological lock-in: Delegating the development of frameworks to a narrow group of actors can entrench rigid approaches, limiting innovation, pluralism, and responsiveness to evolving needs and contexts.

Capacity gaps: Ambitions require infrastructure. Without adequate resources to build and maintain indicator systems and institutions, even well-designed frameworks will struggle to deliver meaningful change.

68%

of the people in G20-countries believe that the economy should prioritize wellbeing for people and nature over profit and growth.

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