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**INTER PARES**  
Parliaments in Partnership  
EU Global Project to Strengthen the Capacity of Parliaments



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World Forum  
for Democracy

World Forum for Democracy Satellite event

# “PARLIAMENTS, CLIMATE CHANGE, AND INTERGENERATIONAL JUSTICE”

co-organised by INTER PARES | Parliaments in Partnership – *EU Global Project to Strengthen the Capacity of Parliaments*, International IDEA and the Council of Europe

## HIGHLIGHTS

“Parliaments, Climate Change, and Intergenerational Justice”, a satellite event of the World Forum for Democracy, was held on 6 October 2021. Co-organised by INTER PARES | Parliaments in Partnership – *EU Global Project to Strengthen the Capacity of Parliaments*, International IDEA and the Council of Europe, the seminar brought together leading activists and experts in the fields of parliaments, climate change, and youth democratic engagement, all taking part in a vivid and interactive discussion.



**144**

Participants



**45**

Countries



**9**

Experts & Activists



**Kevin Casas-Zamora,**  
Secretary-General, International IDEA

*“Defeatism or inaction are not viable options for democracy. Neither is it acceptable to be complacent over the shortcomings of democracy. Democracy needs to be rethought, revised, and reinvigorated to be able to tackle everyday issues but also perhaps fundamentally existential challenges to deliver now and in the future. It is only through concerted actions, global partnerships, exchange of best practices and innovative methods that we stand a chance to make a difference. We owe no less to future generations.”*



**Claudia Luciani,**  
Director of the Human Dignity, Equality and Governance Directorate,  
Council of Europe

*“There is a close link between democracy and climate change. We need to move a step ahead and explore how democracy can help us save the environment, which is not the only issue challenging us today.”*



Recording of the webinar is available on [YouTube](#).

# 10 Key Takeaways

**1** **Climate change must be at the heart of the priorities of parliaments and governments. However, there is a huge difference in the time frames within which parliaments and climate change operate:** parliaments typically have a 4- or 5-year election cycle, whereas climate change is a long-term issue. This can lead to major complications such as democratic myopia and climate change governance failure.

**2** **Intergenerational justice in addressing climate change includes justice between young and old, as well as present and future generations.** Young and future generations did not cause the climate change crisis, but they are most affected by it. Furthermore, their voices are either overshadowed, or excluded altogether in the case of future generations, as only those of voting age are represented in democratic decision-making.

**3** **Everyone affected by collective decisions should have a voice.** Young people are typically under-represented both in the electorate and in parliament. According to **Michael Rose**, the reasons for this include:

- High minimum voting age.
- Power positions concentrated among older, established citizens; an ageing population in Europe and elsewhere accounting for a growing proportion of voters.
- Frequently, lower voting engagement of the young generation.

## Sustainability

“Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

1987 definition by the United Nations  
Brundtland Commission.



# 4

**Reforming parliamentary systems can support intergenerational justice and limit aftermaths of climate change** on young and future generations. **Michael Rose** highlighted possible changes that include, but are not limited to:

- Lowering the voting age.
- Ensuring youth quotas in election lists of political parties.
- Establishing Youth and Climate councils.
- Creating institutions for future generations that introduce the basic interests of future generations into the political decision-making process.

More information can be found in the [Keynote Presentation](#) by **Michael Rose**, Post-doctoral Research Associate, Research group Governance, Participation & Sustainability, Leuphana University. The presentation includes case-studies on parliamentary reforms.

# 5

**Voting is not a privilege, it's a democratic right.** In a robust discussion among speakers and participants of the workshop, it was suggested that by lowering the voting age, young generations get a chance to influence the decision-making process, that directly affects their lives.

However, it is important to remember that not all young people prioritise climate justice. On average they care more than older generations, but they have different perspectives. Surveying shows for instance that in the United Kingdom around 40% of teenagers rate climate change their top issue.



**Tommy Peto,**  
Expert in Youth Voting and Children's Rights

*"The reasoning to lower the voting age lies between concepts of psychological and political maturity. People hit psychological maturity between 14-16 years old so that cannot justify refusing vote to young people. And young people get interested and involved only once they're invited to take part. Otherwise, why should they bother if they have no impact?"*

**Tommy Peto** stressed that lowering the voting age is a democratic way to ensure justice, because young people are mature and part of a democratic society, regardless of what they think on climate change or other issues. Eventually, this will help achieve certain climate outcomes, to the extent that young people are particularly concerned about environment.

For climate justice, complementary approaches are essential: initiatives from grassroots activism such as "Fridays for Future", civil society engagement, and institutional reforms can help make the voices of future generations heard and considered.



# 6

**Lowering a legal age from when a person is allowed to be elected is another clear path to secure intergenerational justice**, as was noted by the speakers to the workshop. **Tommy Peto** suggested two ways in which age limits for elected officials are undemocratic:

1. They prevent voters of any age from choosing the person they want to represent them. For example, in the United States one cannot elect a President who is under 35 years.
2. Age limits reduce the representativity of elected bodies and governments because some citizens are excluded.



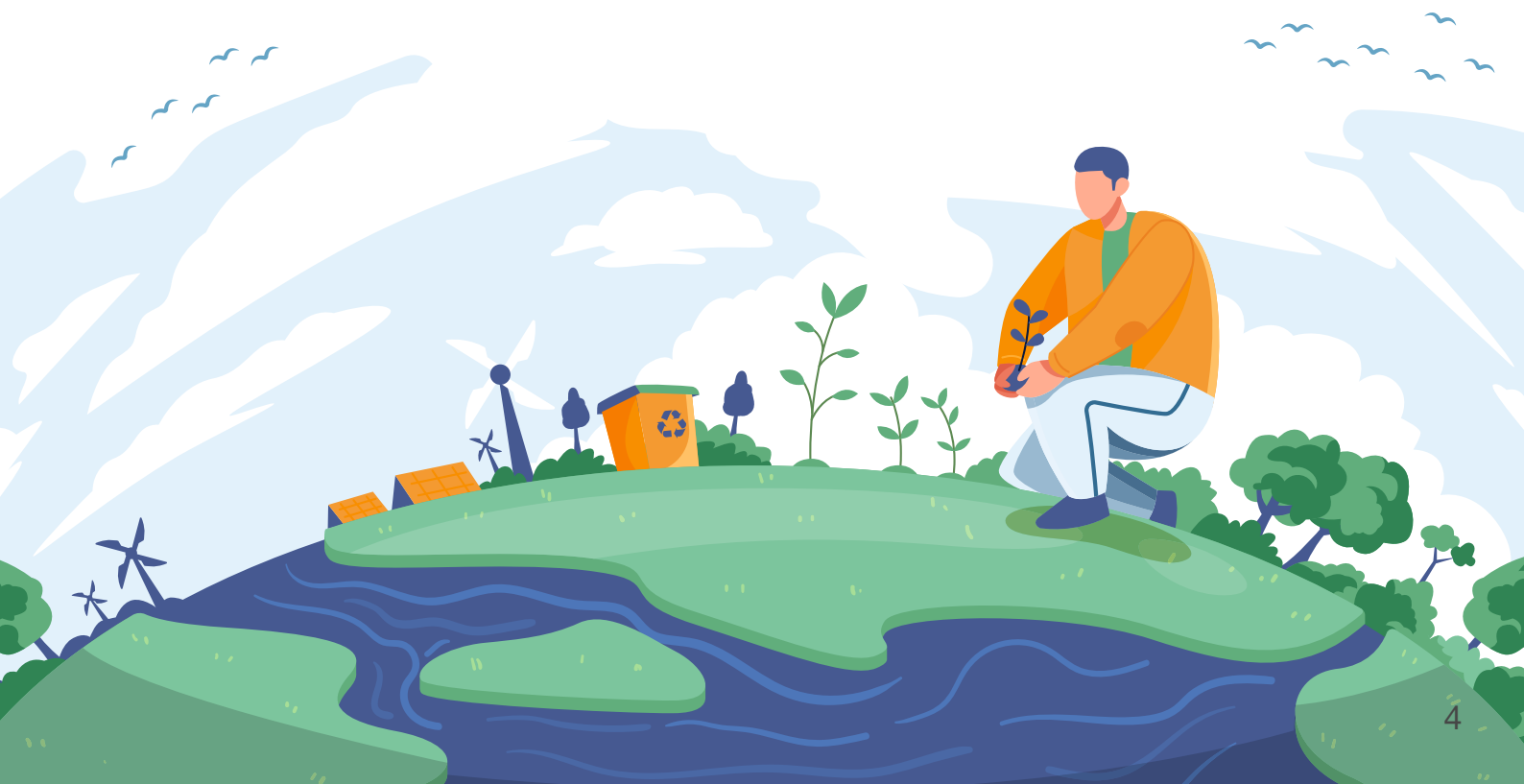
**Anna Luhrmann,**  
Member of Parliament, German Bundestag

*“When comparing the voting age and the age from which you are allowed to be elected, in many countries we can see a huge gap. People are allowed to vote, fight in wars but not to be elected. We need more young voices in the representative institutions.”*

## German Federal Elections in 2021 results

According to calculations of the Federal Returning Officer, the average age of members of the new Bundestag is 47.3 years, female members being on average 45.5 years old and male members 48.2. However, the proportion of young politicians in the Bundestag is on the increase: 50 members are younger than 30, while another 143 are between 30 and 39 years old. The parliamentary group with the lowest average age is the Greens at 42.4 years, while the group with the highest average age is the AfD at 51.

Source: <https://www.deutschland.de/en/topic/politics/bundestag-election-the-composition-of-the-parliament>



# 7

**Creating institutions for future generations that introduce their basic interests into the political decision-making process** can ensure that the interests of future generations are considered on the political agenda. At the same time, there is no common clear pattern to establish such institutions. As mentioned by **Michael Rose**, the existing examples came into being in different circumstances, as intergenerational justice possibilities depend on numerous factors.

Factors involved in facilitating parliamentary focus on future generations may include such as level of economic development, procedural issues, leadership model, political regime, general state of welfare, social pressure in the country.

However, the growing number of parliamentary committees and processes geared to long-term governance questions shows increasing awareness of the need to govern for the long-term – to take into account the kind of planet our children will inherit.

## Examples of institutions for future generations:

Parliamentary Committee for the Future in Finland, Parliamentary Advisory Council for Sustainable Development in Germany, The Knesset Commissioner for Future Generations in Israel, Parliamentary Commissioner for Future Generation in Hungary, etc.



**Michael Rose,**  
Post-doctoral Research Associate, Research group  
Governance, Participation & Sustainability, Leuphana University

*“There are studies that compare performances on climate change and environment in autocracies and democracies. We see benefits in democratic societies. The fight against corruption is a very important factor when it comes to implementation. Parliaments play a role in confronting corruption and thus combating interests that go against intergenerational justice and climate change.”*

# 8

**Providing educational opportunities** and sharing knowledge is vital in ascertaining the voice of young generations, especially in developing countries and emerging democracies.



**Steven Setiawan,**  
Young Delegate, World Forum for Democracy & Representative  
of Indonesia for Youth4Climate: Driving Ambition, Indonesia

*“Many young people cannot prioritise climate change as they are forced to provide for their living. Climate change and civic education, both formal and informal can help shape young minds open to the future challenges.”*



9

### **Underrepresented communities are often excluded from decision-making process.**

For example, the voices of indigenous peoples are heard less, as they have few resources to protect their interests. If national governmental support is limited, voices can be shared through international initiatives.

Indigenous communities can also use formal mechanisms of direct representation. For example, committees in national parliaments can take evidence from indigenous groups. One of the reasons for political myopia is a series of psychological biases, where what is not voiced is not considered. Young people being at the forefront of fighting climate change is a powerful way of tackling those biases by policymakers.



#### **Dayana Blanco Quiroga,**

Young Delegate, World Forum for Democracy & Activist for climate change and women indigenous rights, Bolivia

*“Through the teenage parliament in Bolivia, we can share our initiatives and raise awareness. To build a sustainable democracy and contribute to climate change, indigenous people lead good initiatives related to natural resources, as they are very connected with this.”*

10

### **It is important for the climate change issue to be present in public debate on different levels.**

Media can become an efficient tool in bringing the youth to participate in the climate change agenda. It is about educating, reporting the facts, but also media can provide framing that provides both current and long-term perspectives. Media can play a role in simplifying scientific findings, facilitating understanding of policies, emphasising existence and visibility of solutions.

Social media can be a powerful instrument for groups whose voices are not easily heard by traditional media. Because the barriers to entry are low, almost anyone can deliver a message, gain support and build up community. However, it cuts both ways: climate denial vs climate activism. Unless social media companies are willing to challenge hate and misinformation on their platforms, a mixed effect is possible. Traditional media remains an important vector, especially in countries with poor access to the internet, where vectors such as radio and TV reach the largest audiences.



# Participants' Views

Many shared their views, answering the question: *"What are the most effective measures Parliaments should take in regard to intergenerational justice and climate change?"*

Lowering the voting age to 16 and youth quotas seem the most effective ones. Youth quota really strikes me as a great way to bring new perspectives into politics.

Citizens' assemblies - participation - empowerment of women, youth, people of colour, people with disability, and other silenced voices!

Climate protection budget.

Laws, conventions and supervisions.

Start political education in school at (much) lower age.

Intentional involvement of members across generations i.e. A seat or two to be specifically occupied by persons of a particular generation. The availability of the position will encourage participation and dialogue.

Create citizens' assemblies.

Ensure these laws are followed, otherwise any action contrary is increasing climate threats to humanity.



# Next steps

The learnings from the presentations and dialogue during “**Parliaments, Climate Change, and Intergenerational Justice**” workshop will contribute to a Toolkit for Parliamentary Climate Action being developed by INTER PARES for release in 2022.

INTER PARES will continue to provide opportunities for peer-to-peer sharing and learning on the interconnected themes of climate change and intergenerational inclusion in the work of democratic parliaments. Some of themes that will be explored through information-sharing, peer-to-peer dialogue between European Union Member State Parliaments and partner Parliaments include:

- Opportunities and challenges of parliamentary institutional innovations focusing on long-term governance challenges including climate change, such as parliamentary committees for the future;
- Enhancing parliaments’ role in monitoring and oversight of national climate change commitments;
- Supporting and learning from initiatives to engage young people in parliamentary work on climate change, such as through young people’s assemblies.

We welcome your comments, ideas, and involvement in our future activities on this topic. Please contact us at: [interpares@idea.int](mailto:interpares@idea.int).





# Thank you

On behalf of the Organising Committee of the “**Parliaments, Climate Change, and Intergenerational Justice**” workshop, INTER PARES | Parliaments in Partnership expresses its deepest appreciation to:

- **Council of Europe** and **World Forum for Democracy** which initiated organisation of the workshop.
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- **International IDEA** which hosts and delivers the INTER PARES project.
- The distinguished Speakers to the Conference: **Dayana Blanco Quiroga**, Young Delegate, World Forum for Democracy & Activist for climate change and women indigenous rights, Bolivia, **Kevin Casas-Zamora**, Secretary-General, International IDEA, **Claudia Luciani**, Director of the Human Dignity, Equality and Governance Directorate, Council of Europe, **Anna Luhrmann**, Member of Parliament, German Bundestag, **Tommy Peto**, Expert in Youth Voting and Children’s Rights, **Michael Rose**, Post-doctoral Research Associate, Research group Governance, Participation & Sustainability, Leuphana University, **Steven Setiawan**, Young Delegate, World Forum for Democracy & Representative of Indonesia for Youth4Climate: Driving Ambition, Indonesia.
- INTER PARES Youth Working Group and its Member **Terriann Baker** from Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, in particular, for delivering the closing remarks.
- The participants of the Conference.

## Disclaimer:

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**INTER PARES** | Parliaments in Partnership  
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**INTER PARES | Parliaments in Partnership – EU Global Project to Strengthen the Capacity of Parliaments** is the first global parliamentary project of its kind. Funded by the EU and implemented by International IDEA, its purpose is to strengthen the capacity of parliaments in partner countries, by enhancing their legislative, oversight, representative, budgetary and administrative functions. It focuses both on elected Members of Parliament (MPs), particularly in their capacity as members of parliamentary committees, and on the staff of parliaments' secretariats.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

The Council of Europe is the oldest European multilateral organisation, whose main tasks are to uphold human rights, democracy, and the rule of law in Europe. It was founded in 1949 and has since become the most inclusive European international organisation. Today, it has 47 member states, with combined population of approximately 820 million.



World Forum  
for  
Democracy

The World Forum for Democracy is a unique platform for political decision-makers and activists to debate solutions to key challenges for democracies worldwide. By identifying and analysing experimental initiatives and practices, the Forum highlights and encourages democracy innovations at the grassroots and their transfer on a systemic level to strengthen the foundations of democratic societies. The Forum thus contributes to the evolution of democracy towards more participatory and inclusive structures and institutions. The 9th edition of the Forum took place in November 2021 in Strasbourg, with the main aim of answering the question "Can Democracy Save the Environment?".

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