

# Themes

FRFG has identified ten key areas with regard to intergenerational justice. These are the topics we do conferences about, publish books and issues of our magazin, or dedicate our awards for young scientists to.

## 1. Fundamental Principles of Intergenerational Justice and Sustainability

"Generational justice" is well on its way to becoming the driving issue for the next centuries. In view of the dramatic changes in the demographic composition of many developed countries, questions concerning the justice between the older, younger, and future generations will be as important as the highly debated questions of social justice (the justice between the rich and the poor). The call for new ethics that consider the rights of coming generations is urgent as we learn about and take responsibility for the far-reaching consequences of human actions. Already there are different political parties with established 'intergenerational justice' clauses in their agendas, but the parties fail to clarify a definition for the term. Research is needed to examine the philosophical roots of the expression and to offer a standard definition for general reference. More...

## 2. Generational Justice in Constitutions

Since its foundation, FRFG seeks solutions for one of the paramount problems of our time: political short-termism. Future individuals cannot vote today. The principle of democracy can, in its traditional and narrow form, conflict with the maxim of intergenerational justice. The need to appease the electorate every four or five years means that politicians direct their actions towards satisfying the needs and desires of present citizens – their electorate. The interests, therefore, of future generations are all too often neglected. Today's technological advancements mean that the consequences of our present undertakings, such as the instalment of nuclear energy plants, will have far reaching effects and a potentially deeply negative influence on the quality of life for numerous future generations. More...

## 3. Ecology

This is the first time in history that the right of future generations to live on an ecologically intact, biologically varied planet is endangered. The greenhouse effect is a byproduct of non-sustainable political environmental action that serves only the current generation. Our current form of energy production is mainly based on fossil fuels. On one hand, through exploiting this resource, there is a uniquely high standard of living within human habitation, but on the other, our exploitation forces long-term externalities onto future generations. Scientific research has determined that present energy policies for the reigning generation of politicians lead to the accumulation of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. The result aggravates the natural greenhouse effect and raises temperatures worldwide. We can already see some disadvantages of this short sighted policy: floods, refugee movements, and conflicts. More...

## 4. National Indebtedness - Living on Credit

In the economic field, too, contemporary politicians are biased for the present. National debts are now rising to levels never before seen. The present generation has long lived beyond the needs of their subsistence, and it has burdened the future generations with the costs of their consumption. Politicians try to buy their re-election with "presents" shortly before elections, and disregard their responsibility for the next generation. This disgraceful political practice must stop. A consensus should be reached and enforced that no generation may live exceeding their means. More...

## 5. Pension Scheme in Crisis

Social security systems, especially the pension scheme, have entered a state of crisis in many developed countries. In the face of unemployment and demographic change there is the threat of overtaxing the taxpayers. Social security contributions are increased daily. However, today's youth cannot expect to receive the same benefits upon retirement. The process of moving the costs from the old to the young has started irrespective of the issues surrounding generational justice. The FRFG calls for a division of costs between old and young (intergenerational justice). Experts

have celebrated the "sharing solution" developed by FRFG. Intragenerational justice must still be reached in many countries. In Germany, for instance, civil servants, politicians and the self-employed have yet to be integrated into the legal pension scheme. More...

## 6. Employment Issues

In many countries, the number of unemployed young people has reached the highest point since World War II (also largely true for the general unemployment rate). The unemployment of youth is an important theme for us. "Rarely in the past have young people been cheated so shamelessly out of their professional perspectives, and at the same time have accepted it so uncomplainingly" (Prof. Dr. Peter Grottian). Unfortunately, many older people secure their jobs and property rights at the expense of the younger generation. Often instead of getting fixed employment after studying, young people are forced to complete a number of badly paid internships. Increasingly, interns are being exploited as cheap labour because they are not covered by the regulatory hand of the public authorities and are badly informed about their rights. They have minimal legal protection, work long hours to try and prove themselves to possible future employers, but they can be fired with very little notice and for no given reason. A new precarious generation has emerged. It is critical that youth are not introduced into the work force with the discouraging experience of unemployment. The young and the old, therefore, must conceive a new solution and structure an intergenerational work contract. More...

## 7. Education

A healthy society is built on the health and capabilities of its citizens. The intellectual capacity and talent of the people are vital resources for the future. In order to give young people the opportunity to work, and to engage in social issues, the state must provide a modern and efficient educational system. Therefore, it is high time for a comprehensive reform of education. More...

## 8. Childrens' Rights - Empowerment to Build Our Future

To begin these necessary reforms, young people must gain rights and enjoy political participation. Only when young people represent a significant body of voters will they enter in the calculations of politicians and change the current situation. The right to vote must no longer be kept from people because of their age. The equality of people below the age of 18 must be acknowledged universally. More...

## 9. Business and Intergenerational Justice

The term "intergenerational justice" is becoming one of the key words in today's society, as is impressively documented in its adoption in the platforms of political parties. The fact that this new term is relevant to businesses is irrefutable, given that today two thirds of the world's largest economies are no longer government-run but rather transnational corporations. With power comes also responsibility. With the combination of intergenerational justice and corporate policy, this research group offers an approach for a social philosophy that transcends the ideas of corporate social responsibility, corporate governance und corporate sustainability. More...

## 10. Demographic Change

In 2011, the world's population reached seven billion people. It took 10,000 generations, up until 1927, to reach two billion people on earth. From 1927-1967 this population doubled. The United Nations predicts that in the year 2050 the world population will increase to nine or ten billion. This prediction implies that over the course of an individual's life span the earth's population will have increased five times over. Population growth is a problem that impacts the environment and a general quality of life. But also population decline in "More Developed Countries" can become a problem. Intergenerational justice and demographic change are intimately linked because it is the size of a generation that determines a great share of its fate. But for better or for worse? The relationships between generational justice and demographic change are extremely complex and not one-directional.

