

# The Case for an Executive Vice President for Wellbeing & Future Generations



The 2019 – 2024 European Commission has been one of the most ambitious on climate and social policies. However, these policies have been disconnected from each other, and from economic policies.

The EU is undergoing the biggest transformation since its foundation. This necessitates a new approach from the European Commission that aligns social, climate & environmental and economic policies. For lasting change that fosters social cohesion, a competitive Europe and strengthens the green transition, Europe needs a new Executive Vice President for Wellbeing & Future Generations.

The 2024 – 2029 mandate must propose a concrete pathway for how we transition to carbon neutrality and a circular economy while achieving social progress and building a resilient and prosperous Europe. Such a tangible pathway should be reflected in the EU priorities.

## **The Problem**

Social, climate and economic policies must go hand-in-hand. They are interconnected, where one policy decision has direct and indirect consequences on the others.

The current hierarchical structure of the European Commission divides economic and social from climate policies. This results in incoherent policy making. For example, setting ambitious climate targets while implementing fiscal rules that prevent the necessary climate investments. Or implementing climate initiatives that disproportionately impact low-income groups in direct contrast to the targets in the European Pillar of Social Rights.

## **A New Executive Vice-President**

An EVP for Wellbeing & Future Generations will help to break the policy silos that divide climate, economic and social policies.

The green transition won't happen in isolation and Europe is facing years of significant reforms linked to enlargement, the single market, a new Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF), defence and industrial policy, while maintaining progress towards our climate and social targets. This EVP will break policy silos, and ensure a long term vision so that today's policies will also deliver for children, young people and future generations.



## 7 Priorities for an EVP

1. Integrate **intergenerational, long-view thinking** in the policy cycle to ensure that the decisions of today are contributing to a better future for children, young people and future generations. This will require development of models to better forecast future developments and enable evidence-based policy-making.
2. Ensure **civil society is central** to building the economy of tomorrow, based on carbon neutrality, social progress, the sustainable management of scarce material resources and circularity. This requires civil dialogue to engage with relevant actors, and civic participation to capture the voices of citizens. This can include engaging with community-led initiatives, cities in transition, citizens' assemblies, youth councils and inclusive city strategic planning, energy communities and cooperatives, etc.
3. Facilitate urgently needed **social and green investments** in Europe through a central fiscal capacity such as a Recovery & Resilience Facility successor instrument post-2026<sup>1</sup>. These instruments should include compulsory earmarking for social and climate investments and green and social conditionalities. The European Commission should propose an EU Social Taxonomy and a social do-no-significant-harm principle, and building own resources through progressive taxation proposals.
4. Coordinate the **European Semester** process ensuring it monitors the implementation of economic, social and climate priorities in a balanced way and makes recommendations to member states to fill existing gaps and strengthen cohesion. Ensure that the resilience scoreboard indicators under the European Semester are being effectively used and that these important social and environmental indicators are not sidelined.
5. Ensuring the revision of the **European Pillar of Social Rights' Action Plan** is aligned with emerging climate threats and economic policies.
6. Oversee an **EU Green Industrial Strategy** that drives the economic transformation towards carbon neutrality and circularity, through a mix of regulation, best practices sharing, capacity building and financing, while supporting quality job creation with decent wages and working conditions for all.
7. Coordinate work across policy areas to ensure that future reforms to the Single Market, including public procurement and state aid rules, support Europe's economic transformation towards climate neutrality and circularity while setting quality criteria that help **promote social, climate and environmental goals**.

The EVP for Wellbeing & Future Generations can coordinate the work of:

- European Commissioner for Social Rights and Jobs
- European Commissioner for Economy
- European Commissioner for Environment, Oceans & Fisheries
- European Commissioner for Cohesion Policy
- European Commissioner for Just Transition & Climate Action

[1] <https://caneurope.org/public-statement-a-social-and-green-investment-plan-for-a-prosperous-and-just-transition/>

## Why Wellbeing & Future Generations?

Wellbeing & Future Generations is a concept which has been campaigned for by youth organisations for many months. Our economies and societies have to work for people. Today people face higher housing, energy and food costs and stagnating real wages because our economies were unprepared for new challenges such as the weaponisation of Europe's dependence on imported fossil fuels. The transformation of our economies to become climate neutral and circular will make them more resilient and competitive. But this will only be supported when people feel they benefit.

A focus on sustainable and inclusive wellbeing ensures Europe develops policies that are people-centred and safeguard the wellbeing of people and planet, ensuring quality employment with decent wages and working conditions while supporting social protection systems and guaranteeing social progress and environmental sustainability.

Future Generations is all about planning for ensuring wellbeing in the future. What is the vision we have for Europe? More than just cutting carbon emissions or improving competitiveness policies, this is about ensuring we improve the quality of life, work and the health of our planet for everyone today, tomorrow and in the decades to come. It is also about protecting people against the impacts of climate change that are already unavoidable, particularly for the most vulnerable.

### Contact Information

**Robbie Stakelum**, Head of Policy & Advocacy,  
Social Platform – [robbie.stakelum@socialplatform.org](mailto:robbie.stakelum@socialplatform.org)

**Isabelle Brachet**, Senior Fiscal Reform Policy Coordinator,  
Climate Action Network Europe - [isabelle.brachet@can europe.org](mailto:isabelle.brachet@can europe.org)

This publication has been supported by the European Climate Foundation.  
Responsibility for the information and views set out in this publication lies with the authors.  
The European Climate Foundation cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained or expressed therein.

