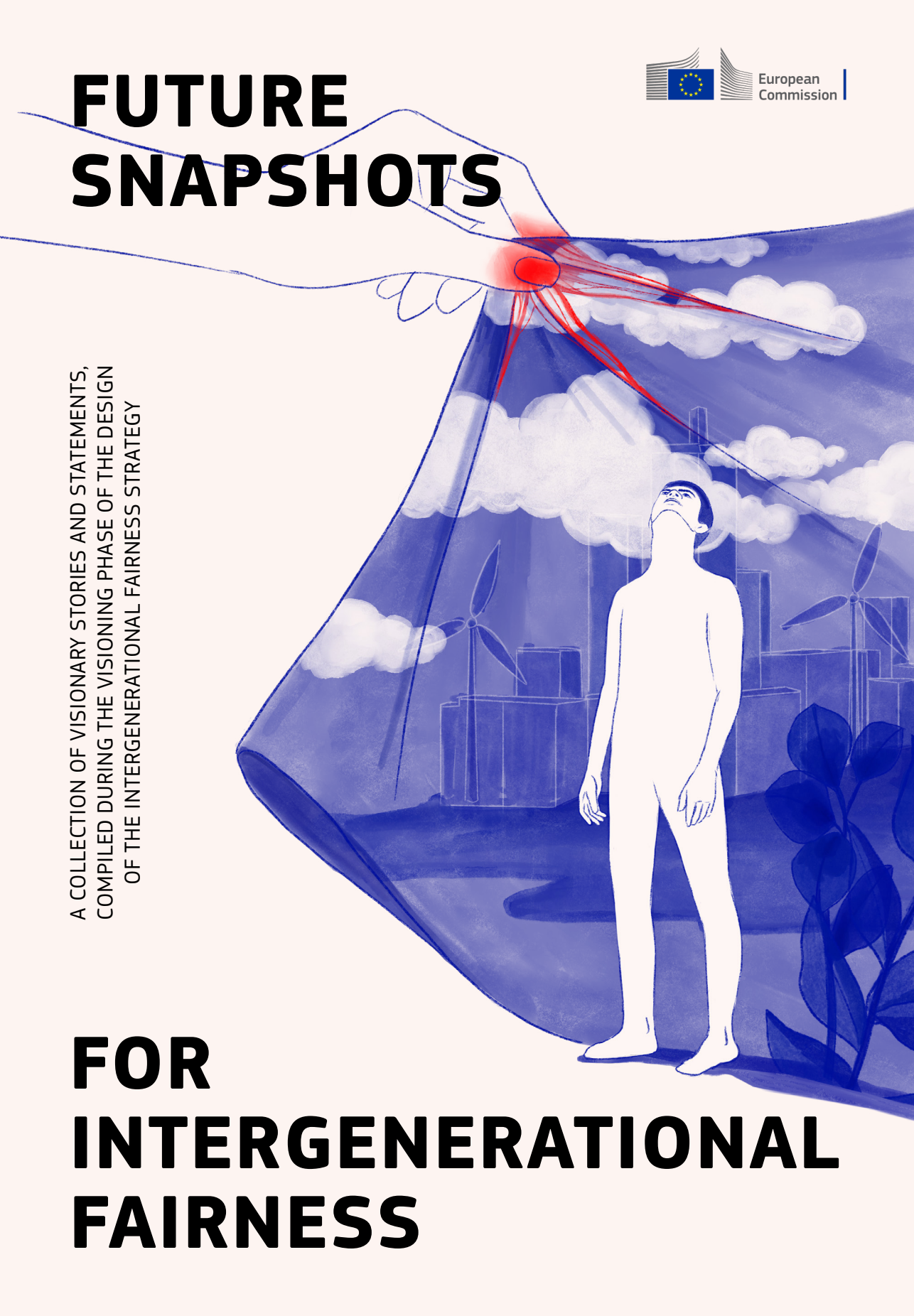


FUTURE SNAPSHOTS

A COLLECTION OF VISIONARY STORIES AND STATEMENTS,
COMPILED DURING THE VISIONING PHASE OF THE DESIGN
OF THE INTERGENERATIONAL FAIRNESS STRATEGY

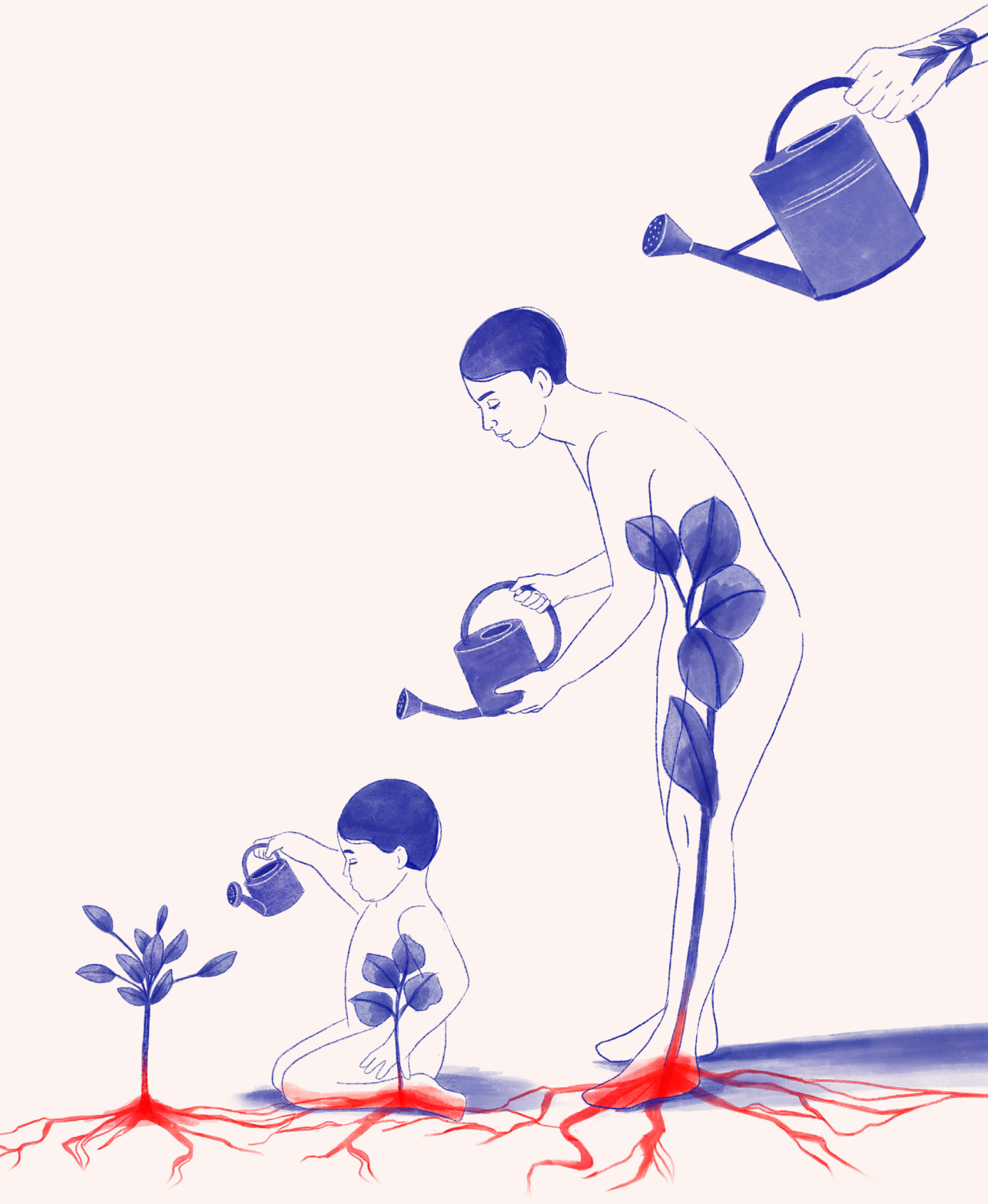
FOR INTERGENERATIONAL FAIRNESS



FUTURE SNAPSHOTS FOR INTERGENERATIONAL FAIRNESS

We warmly thank the authors of these future snapshots—the dedicated European Commission staff who, with their skill in sci-fi and literary writing, have brought intergenerational fairness to life: Adam Gerencsér, Andrea Furlan, Cristina Hernandez de la Poza, Federico Dainotti, Micol Morosi, Naouma Kourti. We also extend our gratitude to the coalitions of Commission staff and external

experts whose diverse perspectives shaped visions of preferable futures, and to the European citizens who shared their contributions through the Citizens' Engagement Platform and #OurFutures. Their engagement, creativity, and insights are the heart of our collective visions for a more fair future for all generations.



INTRODUCTION

Visioning is an exercise of collective imagination of ideal futures. Visions focus on people's aspirations: what is worth aiming for. They are not goals themselves, which must be realistic, practical and achievable with current capacities and resources. Rather, they help to think beyond the limitations of today, encouraging a transformative perspective and motivating us to activate the necessary agency to achieve our aim. They help to collectively set the goals and objectives that can be steps in that direction.

With collective imagination there can be no single vision of the future. The multiple visions, collected in the visioning phase of the design of the strategy for intergenerational fairness and selected in this booklet, offer many "snapshots", that is, different perspectives on what we would like future generations to experience. In this diversity, there are however some common elements, which resonate throughout the different stories: Inspiration, Connection & Care.

01 INSPIRATION

To counter short-termism, these stories offer an intergenerational, long-term perspective and broader horizons that motivate and inspire future-oriented action.

02 CONNECTION

To counter limited collaboration between generations, which weakens social cohesion, the stories evoke images of community, belonging, and engagement, revealing new or renewed ways of living together.

03 CARE

To counter exclusion and inequality that prevent people from full participation in society, the stories convey feelings of compassion, support, and empowerment, emphasizing the importance of caring for the most vulnerable.

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INSPIRATION

The stories that follow were created by European Commission staff, with the additional craft of writing sci-fi and literary work. Inspired by citizens and coalitions envisioning a fairer future for all, these authors bring intergenerational fairness to life, transforming abstract ideals into vivid narratives and lived experiences.



BLOOMING GREEN

written by Micol Morosi

"It's useless."

Gil's voice was cold and monotone, and to an alien ear it might have sounded almost contemptuous. However, by now Lily knew it was just his weird way of speaking. Or at least, she hoped so.

Admittedly, he wasn't completely wrong.

The foolish idea of turning that illegal dump – her illegal dump, since she had invested all her life savings to purchase the abandoned lot as soon as it was put up for auction – back into the park it had been a few decades earlier was... well, foolish indeed. She was all alone, she was almost broke, and her thumb had never been one of the greenest, so to say. But the memo-

ries of the long hours she had spent there as a kid, playing with her friends, climbing trees and eating raspberries were so vivid in her mind that seeing the place all covered up by piles of waste had angered her to the point where she had felt she had to do something.

She adjusted her pollution mask on her mouth and sighed, taking a good look at the giant buildings – AI data centres – looming on the other side of the street. Even if she managed to clear all that rubbish and plant trees and flowers, who would ever allow their kids to play there?

"According to my calculations it's going to take years just to restore the ground to a sufficient



generative capacity and even longer for whatever you intend to plant to start to prosper here. Maybe I should remind you that you earthlings have a regrettably short lifespan.”

“And maybe I should remind you,” Lily said, turning towards Gil and pointing her finger to his face, “that you... you...”

She stopped.

“What was your planet’s name, again?” Lily asked, realizing as she was speaking that maybe holding back the snarky retort she was about to throw at him wasn’t a bad idea. It wouldn’t have been kind to remind him that she didn’t trust gardening advice from someone whose people had exhausted their planet’s resources to the point of catastrophic collapse, forcing him to flee into space (and crash into a dump – her dump).

Gil made a guttural, yet somehow soft sound. “That, in your underdeveloped language, would correspond to... Malachite. Like the vibrant green mineral. The name comes from our main planetary ridge which is – was – made of a mineral that matches your malachite for roughly 98.78% of its composition.”

“Well then, I should remind you that you Malachitians need to learn to have a bit of fun. I don’t care if it’s useless.”

“But you are actively wasting your – may I say, limited – resources for nothing.”

“You know what? Sometimes I regret digging you and your little spaceship up from this mess. I have enough negative energy all around me as it is.”

“According to my database, you earthlings haven’t really grasped the concept of negative energy yet, as proved by your rudimentary space-time travel technology,” Gil commented. He stopped for a second and his expression became a bit softer, his posture more relaxed, as

if he was pondering what to say next – which was very uncharacteristic from him. “But I am... truly thankful that you excavated me and my emergency pod from this rubbish.”

He shifted back to his usual demeanor.

“Which is also why I’d like to repay my debt towards you by preventing you from doing something utterly useless,” he concluded.

Lily smiled.

“I told you; I don’t really care if it’s useless or not. I am doing it because I want to, and I want to because it’s the right thing to do. Now, if you really want to repay me,” she said, picking up her tool bag and thrusting it into his arms, “help me turn this pile of garbage into a park where kids can play once again.”

“I can do that, and I will. But let me remind you that according to my calculations you will never see–”

“Then you’ll see it for me. And when you do, tell me all about it.”

“That’s utter nonsense. As soon as your lifespan ends I won’t be able to communi... ah, but you’re not listening anymore,” Gil said, as Lily walked away towards one of the hugest piles of waste.

“Come on Gil,” she shouted, turning back towards him. “This rubbish won’t clean itself!”

“help me turn this pile of garbage into a park where kids can play once again.”

As it turned out, not only did the rubbish not clear itself, but the flowers didn’t plant themselves either, nor did the raspberry bushes (or the blueberry or any others), and especially not the trees. Also, none of the owners of the neigh-

bouring AI data centres decided to sell their lots of their own accord, but they did after much discussion and a pinch of an... alien touch (and a lot of money); the local government didn’t reinforce pollution laws of its own accord, and the national government took even longer to be persuaded, and all in all, it took decades before the old ways had been entirely replaced by new ones.

And, just like that, Gil realised that more than a century had passed since the day he was entrusted with some gardening tools and a vision. He adjusted his elongated figure in his chair behind the stall and watched as people began to flow into the park to explore the various stands and booths for the annual Spring Fair.

“...And none of them is wearing a mask,” he whispered towards a vase next to him in which a vibrant green flower was blooming, its petals streaked with a deeper shade of emerald here and there.

“My, my, what a lovely flower stand!” an elderly lady exclaimed, stopping right next to Gil. “Such beautiful roses! And magnificent daffodils! But pray tell, what’s this peculiar flower here?”

“This?” Gil said softly, gesturing to the vase. “Well, I suppose that in your language you’d call it a malachitian lily”.

A.R.C.adia

written by Andrea Furlan

I stand in front of the gravestone in the ancient country cemetery.

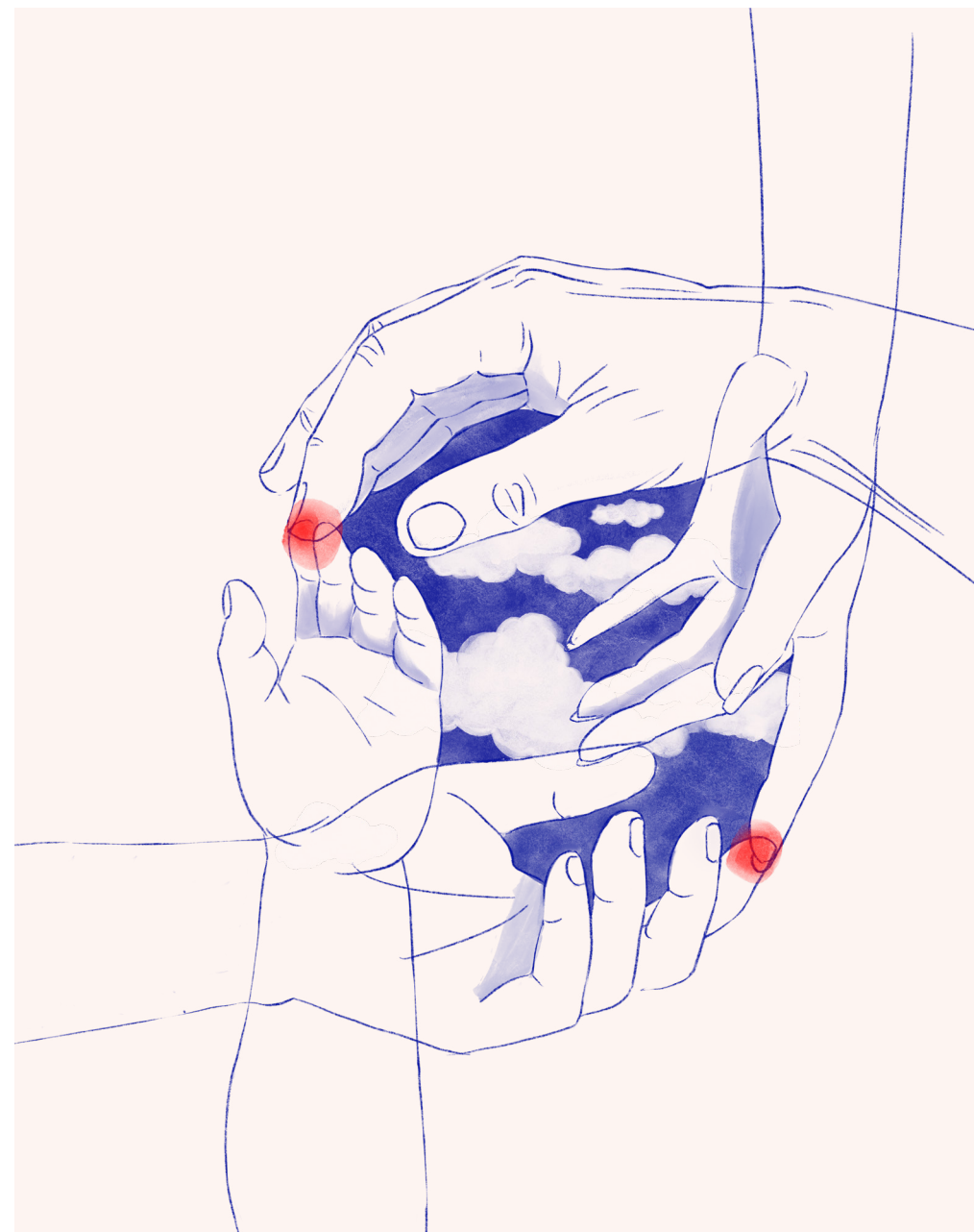
It's six a.m., and chilly: my bones are hurting but I barely notice. I stare at her smiling picture, kiss the tip of my fingers and touch it, as if I'm doing in it on her cheek.

«This can be the day, Flora. The one you always dreamed about. I just hope to be bold enough to finish what you have started.»

I think of the period when we were just retired, living in the house we bought between the fields. We finally had time to do what

we always wanted to, enjoying waking up with no rush, just waiting to start the day together.

I shake my head and leave the place. Remembering makes me emotional, and I also feel pressure, an emptiness at the mouth of my stomach: even if I'm used to it, after passing so many years negotiating commercial agreements around the world for my work, today seems way more difficult. Flora is gone, but her dream is still with me. I must make it real today.



I have the full morning before the meeting. In my previous life I would have done another dozen of tasks in the meantime. But the strength of the Community is solidarity, devoting time to the others: my most precious resource nowadays.

At home, I measure my parameters: each morning my pressure and blood sugar level, that I enter on my phone to feed the daily statistics. The doctor follows all of us quite strictly, avoiding as much as possible long transfers to the city, especially for elderly people like me.

It's only a short walk to the house of the kids but I enjoy the light and smell of this beautiful morning. After passing decades in a dull Brussels, I feel so lucky to live in this place: the countryside is green, full of sun.

I open with my keys and enter their room, taking a minute to stare at them. Licia is twelve, a blonde princess that loves dancing. Roberto is spread all over his bed, an eight-year-old concentrate of curiosity.

«Wake up, sweetheart » I whisper in their ear. Licia's blue eyes, still trapped in a dream, open slightly. She resembles so much to my Anna: I used to wake her in the same way when she was her age. Now she lives in Indonesia, very far from our mountains, as a marine biologist.

«Morning Grandpa. Can we go fishing today after the homework? » Roberto is always looking for new challenges. Even if I don't have any more the stamina to follow his requests, I know he is keeping me a bit younger.

«Sure, lad. But first you must tell me what you have learned today at school. »

I often take care of them, as their parents are always busy, leaving the house very

early in the morning: he is the Director of a company, she teaches at a university in the city.

Even if I don't have any more the stamina to follow his requests, I know he is keeping me a bit younger.

I prepare breakfast and bring them to school, then drive back to the Community Council.

In the Council room I feel a great sense of expectation: my fellow members are already all there, chatting nervously. The youngest is fifteen years old, I am one of the oldest, and the rest of us are represented by age and gender: one of Flora's greatest ideas to give equal opportunities to everyone.

On the computer the other Communities are connecting, preparing for the meeting: there are already more than two thousand, from all over Europe. I feel lucky, as I had the chance to visit many of them together with Flora.

Mountain villages like ours, fishermen from northern islands, towns from central Europe great plains, rural areas from the Balkans. All different but sharing the same goals.

It was just for her perseverance and long-term vision that they granted us the leading role in the negotiation with Brussels: even if the President of the Commission asked to meet us in presence many times, we decided to always discuss with our full network. Nobody must be left behind.

Time is up, we take place on our seats and the meeting starts.

«Mr. Bianchi, the College received the pro-

posal of the Rural Communities that you represent- »

«I'm sorry to interrupt you, Mr. President, but I don't represent anyone. As you can see, we are all here. » I always point it out, on any occasion. Our unity is the strength that keeps us together.

«Right, sorry. I always forget it. Your proposal is about the solidarity principles that will apply to all Communities, the floor is yours. » I take out the paper we agreed with the other Communities. The foundation of Flora's work written in simple rules. I read it slowly, but I know it by heart.

Help each other, put together the resources we have. Time for me, help and care when I need it, from their parents.

Explaining the principles that already regulates our community life, I remember the moment when I woke up the kids this morning: help each other, put together the resources we have. Time for me, help and care when I need it, from their parents. We apply it in any moment of our life together, without asking anything else in exchange.

The President nods, listening carefully, then takes the word again.

«Thank you, we would like to make you aware of our decision: the Union can grant to your Rural Communities the status of Autonomous. As for previous agreements this means you can collect your own taxes, set your laws, in accordance with the demographic, economic and environmental con-

text of each Community. » He knows how much we were waiting for these words and finishes the speech with a smile.

The Council starts cheering in the room, as well as all the other participants online.

When we exit the building a small crowd of people is there applauding, including the ones that live in the most remote areas.

Two young girls that study at university and I helped find a flat in the village, carry a big panel: "Autonomous Rural Communities = A.R.C.adia " is written on it.

I understand their message: Arcadia was the mythical Greek region where humans and nature lived in harmony. They are right, I hug them with a smile.

It is only in that moment that I fully realise. We did it Flora, finally we did it.

NEA-HERACLEION 3

written by Cristina Hernandez de la Poza

The domino effect or the butterfly effect? Which one prevails?

While our history explains our actions, it does not define us. However, with well-presented information, history is capable of partially glimpsing our future.

H.J. Poursons

Making a decision is not always easy. The communication sent from the Ethics and Welcome Panel of Nea-Heracleion congratulated her on her latest work on the kinetic energy absorption and storage capacity in mixed materials. Describing it as "a highly promising interpretation", she was finally invited to learn firsthand about

the latest European project: the construction of Nea-Heracleion 3. Also known as NH3, it was a project as radical as it was interesting: a new urban area with 20,000 inhabitants, close to the coast, capable of drawing from the wisdom of current society while avoiding all past vices. NH3 was to be built entirely following the recommendations from a council. This council included researchers from different backgrounds, including different ages, religions, political tendencies, fields of knowledges, and gender. The objective: a carefully designed city to be the first energy-efficient, self-sufficient, and completely renewable.

NH3 was based on the results of previous mod-



els. Although NH1 and NH2 followed more modest premises, both had brought about significant lessons. The first NH, also known as NH1, aimed to achieve a significant improvement in public health outcomes, including a consistent health prevention programme. Thanks to innovative monitoring and strong preventive measures, disease rates (which elsewhere decimated populations) were reduced to a third. The population was highly aware and followed a strict regimen of exercise, diet, and sleep. Its initial results were very promising. Everything seemed to proceed according to the original simulations. However, at the end of the second year, something went wrong. The variance of some indicators approached zero. Two years later, the population became homogeneous in most aspects. No one dared to disobey their strict schedule. No one committed an offense. Thus, all inhabitants consistently enjoyed an environment with very low pollution, a perfectly healthy diet, and an enviable exercise routine. Without exceptions. This rigidity was transferred from their activities to their ideas, and from their ideas to their hearts. Anyone who did not adhere to the city's principles was isolated and forgotten. New ideas ceased to emerge, creativity disappeared, and four years after its inauguration, the city was shut down "out of respect for human freedom."

From the ruins of NH1 emerged a new NH2 – stronger, wiser, and furthermore technologically advanced. NH2 had abandoned the health crusade in favor of the hyper-connection. The city of the moment: "Unlimited and immediate access" was its motto. As a base ingredient, NH2 featured an extensive and varied social spectrum to correct past mistakes. It would be a technocratic yet diverse society.

To achieve hyper-connection, inhabitants were

equipped with wearables capable of transmitting complex ideas and conveying emotions. This ensured their universal adoption in the city, as no physical or mental barriers limited access. People of all ages, languages, and levels of knowledge were hyper-connected through bracelets, glasses, or headbands. The society would finally become a society of respect.

Her reasoning became the city's motto – her lasting legacy: "Dreams are not pursued; they are built."

However, aware of NH1's fate, some researchers doubted NH2's success. Some debated whether this society would accelerate the emergence of new technologies, or slow their development. But what they never imagined was that this emotional hyper-connection would overwhelm a large part of the population, confusing them and inhibiting the more restrained emotional responses. Thus, the society grew exhausted and extreme, fracturing into small, ideologically homogeneous groups that could sustain only passive, inward-focused hyper-connections. In a short time, the society was radicalized. Some disturbances emerged in the easternmost neighborhoods, spreading like a stain toward the center. Soon, NH2 saw its population migrate to new territories in search of greater tranquility and stability. Some of the most extremist ideas escaped, and new riots erupted. Therefore, one year after its inauguration, NH2 was dismantled "to ensure both external and internal human security."

This new failure was more difficult to accept, and its management much more complex. For years, the two NHs were symbols of shame

and folly. No one wanted to investigate further. The most prestigious researchers abandoned any related project and a shadow fell over their memory. But if there is something to admire in humans, it is their ability to build in the most difficult scenarios. And from these ruins, decades later, the idea of NH3 emerged like a rebirth. NH3 simply wanted to be green. A promise of a better future with clean and secure energy for all, words desperately desired and needed during that time. For this, the city would need the best multidisciplinary team to be designed from zero.

Within this context, she had a quick glance at how her latest research could potentially capture kinetic energy from everyday vehicles' motion and pedestrian movement in an almost never-ending energy cycle. However, the mere mention of the NHs was a big issue, thus converting the project into something dubious. It was seen as doomed. Who would want to participate?

A couple of weeks later, she attended her meeting with the Panel. Her head hurt from contemplating so many options, and she had more questions than answers. NH3 seemed like an inspiring project, although since her adolescence she had decided not to believe in utopias. However, as a researcher, she wanted to know every possible detail of the project. What was it like? What variables had been considered? How were they organized?

The visit to the design center was long and intense. Researchers animatedly debated and soon invited her to share her opinions. Later, Dr. C. Houdray identified that moment as decisive for her participation in the project. Her reasoning became the city's motto – her lasting legacy: "Dreams are not pursued; they are built."

IMAGINE WAKING UP TO A WORLD WHERE..

The futures presented here were envisioned by coalitions—working groups of European Commission staff and external experts with varied expertise and diverse viewpoints—who contributed to shaping the strategy for intergenerational fairness. Each future outlines a desirable outcome within a specific policy field identified during the initial scoping phase of the strategy as important topics to address.

Imagine waking up to a world where policymaking shifts from reactive crisis management to proactive anticipation and preparedness. It's guided by collective intelligence, accountability and transparency.

Institutions hold mandates to consider the long-term horizons. This reveals where incremental adjustments are insufficient and creates space for ambitious action.

Anticipation is seen as a core component of good governance. It's embedded in performance management, budgeting, and strategic planning. Future generations' interests are mainstreamed in EU policies.

Citizens are meaningfully involved in shaping their futures, re-building trust in institutions. Permanent citizen engagement processes with real, significant power and forward-looking mandates.

Policies prioritize wellbeing, social justice and environmental health, aiming for fair outcomes across generations. Moving beyond divisive age-based categories, using inclusive concepts that unite rather than divide.

The relevance of intergenerational fairness is explicitly recognized across policy domains: technology, gender, climate, and defense.

Visualize a society where a continent's commitment to future generations makes it stronger, more stable, and globally admired. In 2050, the EU stands as a resilient powerhouse—not just through military or economic might, but through visionary EU and international investments anchored in fairness across time.

We are now in a system where the EU has slashed its external dependencies. Circular supply chains, homegrown green tech, and strategic climate adaptation have turned past vulnerabilities into strengths. Internally, climate shocks are managed through proactive investment, while the Intergenerational Fiscal Compact ensures lasting economic credibility. These foundations attract global partnerships, not just for trade, but for shared values.

We could reimagine the EU as a global norm-setter—one that leads by example through ethical trade, fair investment standards, and climate ambition. It would influence international

institutions by embedding intergenerational equity into global decision-making. From climate finance in the Global South to multilateral reforms championing long-termism, the EU's internal coherence has made it a future-focused force for good. Intergenerational fairness, once seen as domestic idealism, is now Europe's most powerful foreign policy asset.

The days to come might look like this: *this planet, intelligent beings still exist and are building on what we know and on what those between us and them discovered. They keep the thread of understanding alive and pass it to their future generations.*

We now live in a system where regulation and innovation are intrinsically linked, allowing us to understand both the challenges and possibilities that new technologies bring. In this world, regulatory approaches are tested alongside technological development, making governance adaptive and responsive.

Foresight becomes a participatory process, ensuring all generations have a voice in shaping the future, and education fosters technology awareness and responsible use among younger generations. Foresight and long-term thinking are also embedded as mandatory components in both general education and technology development, building a culture of anticipatory governance and future-conscious decision-making.

We are now in a system where technology is not driven solely by for-profit organizations. Instead, the public sector has a strong part to play, ensuring meaningful democratic control and incorporating intergenerational perspectives. Governance systems are equipped with technical and interdisciplinary expertise, enabling them to adapt to the accelerating pace of innovation and address potential blind spots before they become problems. This is supported by multi-actor collaboration across disciplines, sectors, and generations, creating inclusive frameworks for evaluating and steering technological impact.

The precautionary principle has become a guiding norm, shifting the focus of governance from reactive to preventive, especially when there is high risk and long-term consequences are uncertain.

Technology uses of strategic importance or higher risk are designated and governed through tailored approaches. Regulatory frameworks focus on how technology is used, rather than

solely on the technology itself, ensuring that societal impacts remain at the forefront. Through cooperation—at least across Europe, and increasingly at the global level—the implications of technology are explored across all sectors of society, including sustainability, health, education, and the workplace. Such cooperation takes into account global disparities, ensuring that technology governance addresses inequalities in infrastructure, access, and influence between high-income and low- and middle-income countries. The European Union plays a leadership role in shaping these regulations, often driving efforts toward the development of a global framework for intergenerational accountability.

The most powerful technologies, especially AI, remain tools under democratic stewardship, not controlled by a handful of private actors. New business models have emerged to encourage innovation without prioritizing financial profit, such as technology B Corps.

Legal frameworks have expanded to include the principle of enabling responsibility, holding actors accountable for contributing to future risks, even when not directly causing them. This legal evolution has culminated in the establishment of binding regulation on intergenerational accountability, integrating long-term responsibility into policy and innovation governance.

Ultimately, we retain meaningful control over technology, ensuring it serves the public good and reflects the voices of all generations. In this world, there is no fetish of the new, innovation is pursued thoughtfully, without blind reverence.

‘Regulatory frameworks focus on how technology is used, rather than solely on the technology itself, ensuring that societal impacts remain at the forefront.’

Envision a time when national governments and municipalities have intergenerational consultation bodies /advisory boards where participants from different age groups and socio-economic backgrounds, including minority communities and experts meet to discuss and provide feedback on policies and actions of the institutions.

After the feedback, a tracking mechanism is in place to track and monitor the implementation of such feedback into the policy/action.

All citizens concerned by policy decisions are empowered to contribute to the design of policies. Citizens - including young citizens - have time and resources for truly being citizens. In our present society is so much focus is on economic and private dimensions of life that there is little time, energy and resources left for contributing to public and political life on a daily basis.

In the future citizens regain their trust in institutions since they are held accountable. In schools, children learn citizenship education, and this will help them be more conscious about their rights and duties and be active citizens.

Imagine if those traditionally excluded from decision-making, also had a voice. This also means those people who are not even born yet but part of a future the state of which we are responsible for.

The not yet born future generations whose lives will surely be affected by our actions, thus their voices should in a way be represented in today's decision-making, especially in issues related to environmental problems. So imagine a world in which these people had specific representation, e.g. spoke-persons or ombudsman like institutions everywhere that only and specifically focus on issues related to them and represent their interests in front of the decision-makers.

Presently we are in a system which usually only focuses on the present and the short-term future, not taking into consideration the long-term effects of our actions, thus making the lives of those in the further future a lot more challenging. We could live in a world in which we make our decisions today with consideration for those who will live on this planet in the future, e.g. our children's grandchildren.

“BLUEPRINTS FOR TOMORROW”

The visions that follow were shared by European citizens who took part in the visioning phase of the strategy for intergenerational fairness. Through their contributions to the Citizens Engagement Platform and the OurFutures project, they helped spark and sustain the collective visions on Europe's future and the possibilities it holds for all generations.

A Sustainable Future: Life in 2040

written by Citizen on #OurFutures

“ In 2040, I envision a world that has fully embraced sustainable living. The air is cleaner, cities are greener, and communities are more connected. The most significant change is in our approach to energy consumption and environmental conservation. Renewable energy sources like solar and wind power dominate the energy sector. Buildings are designed with energy efficiency in mind, featuring solar panels, green roofs, and vertical gardens. Urban farming provides fresh produce locally, reducing the carbon footprint associated with transportation. Transportation has transformed dramatically. Electric public transit systems powered by renewable energy have decreased emissions and noise pollution. Personal electric vehicles are widespread, and a cultural shift towards walking, cycling, and shared mobility has improved public health and reduced traffic congestion. Education emphasizes environmental stewardship from a young age. Students engage

in community projects that foster a deep understanding of sustainability and their role in protecting the planet. Communities are more self-sufficient through localized microgrids and effective waste management systems. Recycling programs and the use of biodegradable materials have minimized landfill use. Technological advancements have helped restore natural ecosystems. Reforestation and ocean clean-up efforts have revived biodiversity, and urban areas are rich with green spaces for recreation and relaxation. This sustainable future not only benefits the environment but also boosts the economy, creating jobs in renewable energy and green technologies. There is a shared commitment to preserving the planet for future generations, demonstrating the positive impact of collective action toward sustainability. This is the future I hope to see where sustainable living is the norm, leading to healthier communities and a thriving planet.”

Harmony of the future

written by Citizen on #OurFutures

“ Although a lot has changed, the human psyche still remains a challenge. Technologies can improve our lives, but the real change is the ability to live harmoniously in harmony with ourselves and the planet. The future is not only about innovation, but also about internal transformation.”

Utopia?

written by Citizen on #OurFutures

“ I wish that we have realized that national borders are only lines on a paper and that we need to cooperate and care for each other globally, we need to realize that we and all future generations are dependent on the decisions we make today so that we think about and only make decisions that we can proudly stand for in front of our global descendants regardless of whether it concerns humanitarian measures such as support and help to fellow human beings, peaceful efforts to support other areas of the earth, democratic efforts to secure the human rights of all people rights or climate-friendly efforts that make our earth habitable and pleasant for future generations.”

The world in 2040 will be like this...

written by Citizen on #OurFutures

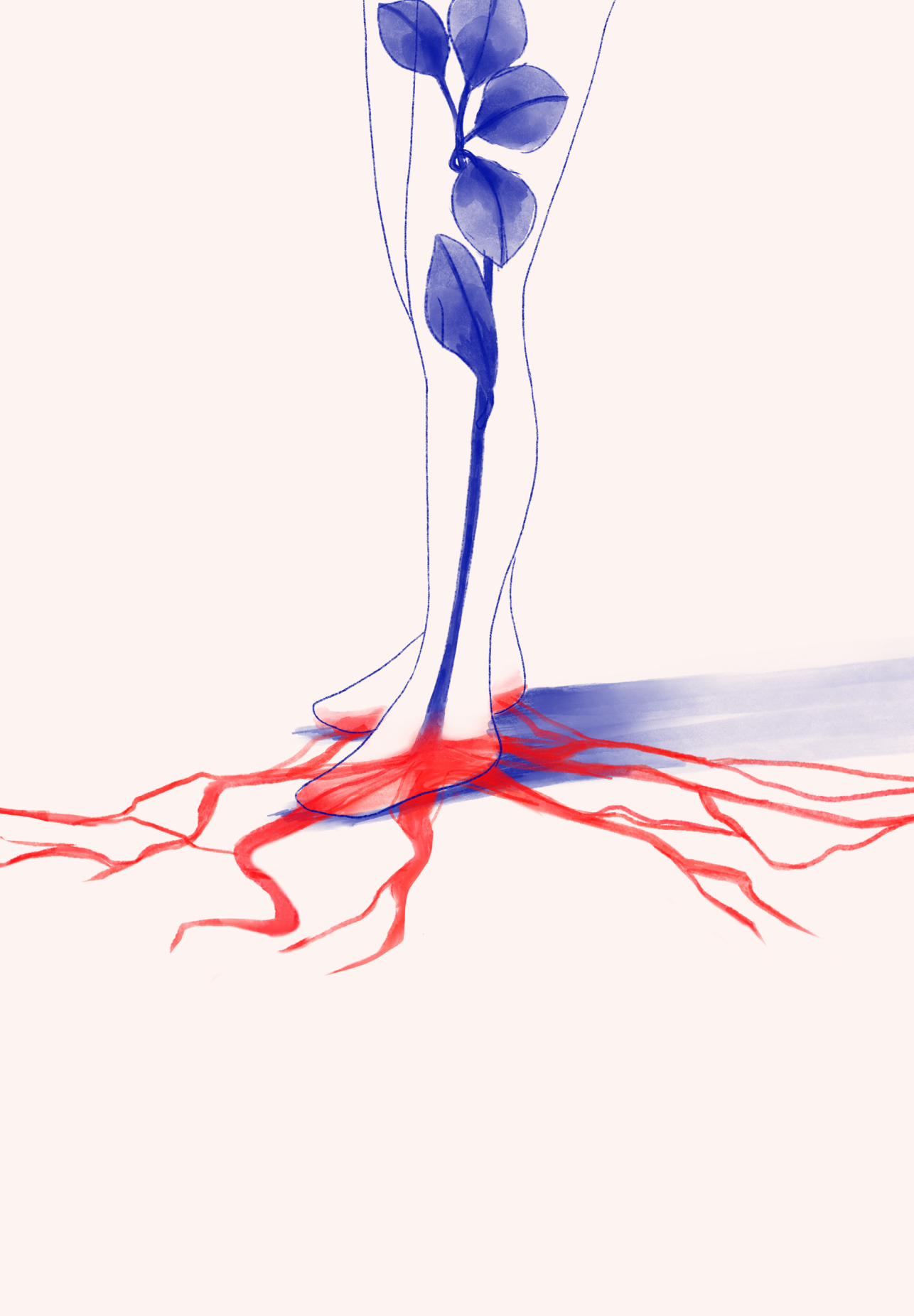
“ A world that relies on technology to improve people's lives. Engineers and scientists are the drivers of progress, and AI is a tool to help us, not rule. People have a balanced life - work and hobbies are equal. Europe has become a leading economic power, surpassing America, China with technology, sustainable innovation. Wars are a thing of the past, as countries have realized that power is measured in innovation, not weapons. The streets are full of electric vehicles, the cities are smart and adapted to people, not just capital. Working from home and flexible schedules are standard, giving people more time for family, sports and creativity. 2040 is proof that we have chosen

Future Europe

written by Citizen on #OurFutures

“ Education had transformed too. Sofia's younger brother, Elias, spent his mornings learning history by exploring immersive recreations of past events. His favorite? The Unity Summit of 2035, where European leaders, activists, and youth representatives signed the Charter for a Regenerative Europe, committing to environmental, social, and technological renewal.”

‘Wars are a thing of the past, as countries have realized that power is measured in innovation, not weapons.’



02

CONNECTION

The stories that follow were created by European Commission staff, with the additional craft of writing sci-fi and literary work. Inspired by citizens and coalitions envisioning a fairer future for all, these authors bring intergenerational fairness to life, transforming abstract ideals into vivid narratives and lived experiences.

GRANDPASMUS

written by Federico Dainotti

Today is an important day. Mom woke us up early and, after having breakfast with the Batman mug, which she keeps as a reminder that I'll always be her child, we get in the car. Whether we like it or not, we are accompanied by the notes of Bruce Springsteen, my father's idol, who, against the doctor's advice, has just kicked off his new European tour at the age of 115. Today we're going to pick up Grandma Maria at the station. She's returning from her Erasmus in Sweden.

Yes, a few years ago, the European Commission launched the "Erasmus for Seniors". The slogan couldn't be more effective: "Erasmus Senior: You never stop learning." After all, the EU officials who designed the program reasoned: Erasmus of Rotterdam himself didn't stop traveling at 25. His last journey, in fact, took place in the final year of his life, at the venerable age of 70, which back then was like Bruce Springsteen's age now.



Grandparents, who once would have stayed their entire lives in their little villages, now find themselves wandering around Europe taking language, digital, and financial literacy courses. Drinking tisane shots with peers from other countries. Playing fierce card games they didn't know before. Sharing from different perspectives the same horrible war which, without grandparents, would have left us with a Europe without freedom. On the phone, before taking the train back, she has been honest: "I don't feel like coming back at all, but I do want to see you."

And yet, it wasn't all perfect at the beginning. Anyone who's been on Erasmus knows the first weeks can be scary.

"It's the adjustment phase. It takes a while, but then you realize that your 'place' isn't just a physical one, it's also where other human beings live. With stories and emotions similar to yours."

You get that strange knot in your stomach, the feeling of not belonging. You speak quietly. Others don't understand you. You don't understand them. There's no family, no best friend, no familiar street, no restaurant where you feel at home, no acquaintance for a reassuring small talk. You reach for a wall to lean on, but there's none. It's just you, your fears, and a bunch of people speaking in strange ways around you.

For an elderly person who has built those

certainties over seventy long years, I imagine it must be even harder.

For Grandma, that's exactly how it began. One time she called us in tears. She couldn't understand what people were saying. A Dutch grandma broke the spaghetti right in front of her. And to drink, she sobbed, they brought her a cappuccino, at 4 p.m. Pizza came topped with strawberries and other exotic fruits. Hearing a grandmother cry is one of the most painful things a grandchild can bear. I immediately booked a ticket to Sweden.

Mom begged me to wait: "It's the adjustment phase. It takes a while, but then you realize that your 'place' isn't just a physical one, it's also where other human beings live. With stories and emotions similar to yours." "Mom, she's 82! The only thing she can adjust to is eating with dentures."

Then, after days of worrying silence, a WhatsApp message arrived. From her. Since when on earth does Grandma use WhatsApp? She sent us a photo. She's sitting at a table, smiling alongside other elderly ladies, raising a beer mug to the sky. "Greetings from Yolanda and Brunhilde. Spanish and German grandmas. The digital literacy course is going great! I even know how to send emojis (winking smile)"

What followed are months of photos of vida loca, grandparents from all over the world, folkloristic group dances in perfect sync. One of the best: a kitchen photo of Grandma with her new friends. She's holding a rolling pin, giving a tagliatelle lesson. She told us the next day they would learn how to make Polish Pierogi.

While Mom and I are chatting, from behind us we hear a 'crack' coming from the kitchen. We turn around in alarm...

The train doors open. It's Grandma! She looks twenty years younger. She's holding a Sicilian flag, signed, as Erasmus tradition dictates, by everyone she met along the way. In the car, she enthusiastically tells us about Sweden, its forests, the joy of learning, of feeling like part of a world that keeps moving forward.

Between the lines, she hints that her new friend Pierrot is something more than just a friend and that she's thinking of visiting him in Lyon. Even the international romance: the full Erasmus experience.

We get home, and Grandma decides to cook her specialty: spaghetti alla norma, a harmony of fried eggplants and tomato sauce. We had missed it so much.

While Mom and I are chatting, from behind us we hear a "crack" coming from the kitchen. We turn around in alarm, fearing it can be some ligament of our beloved old lady. But no.

We are stunned: Grandma has broken the spaghetti.

Without giving us time to react, with pride, she explains how a Slovak grandpa, once a chemist, explained her that breaking spaghetti before cooking increases the surface exposed to water, helping starch gelatinization and making pasta easier to digest.

As I smile, I start thinking that in that broken spaghetti, maybe, together we have man-

aged to break the granite belief that things would never change, that the future would remain a dark and frightening place, and that our elderly would only be a burden to deal with at the end of a working day.

We sit down at the table and start eating. The pasta is delicious. Even with broken spaghetti.

"I am 63 years old, and my proposal is based on the consideration of valuing the training, knowledge, and experiences that older people and young people can contribute to an intergenerational collaboration project. I propose to boost and contribute to an active and healthy life for the elderly through tourist visits to rural environments in the European regions themselves, for one to three days. [...] Older people need a social cohesion network to encourage them to participate and stay active. But in addition to sharing experiences with other people of their age, the innovation of this project lies in knowing the culture, history, heritage, and gastronomy of the places we will visit."

written by Isabel Moya

OK ZOOMER

written by Adam Gerencsér

Frag.

Bullets built of pixels project from gun-shaped polygons that protrude into his field of vision where his hands should be. Zipping among the neon-clad walls of the obstacle course, his comrades-in-arms hop, skip and jetpack their way towards hovering objectives in yet another round of capture-the-flag.

He's still exhausted from the previous bout. It ended abruptly, once again with him barely having made it out of range from the spawn point. Yet in the time it takes him to absorb the results and focus on the re-spec screen, another countdown pops up amidst his field of vision.

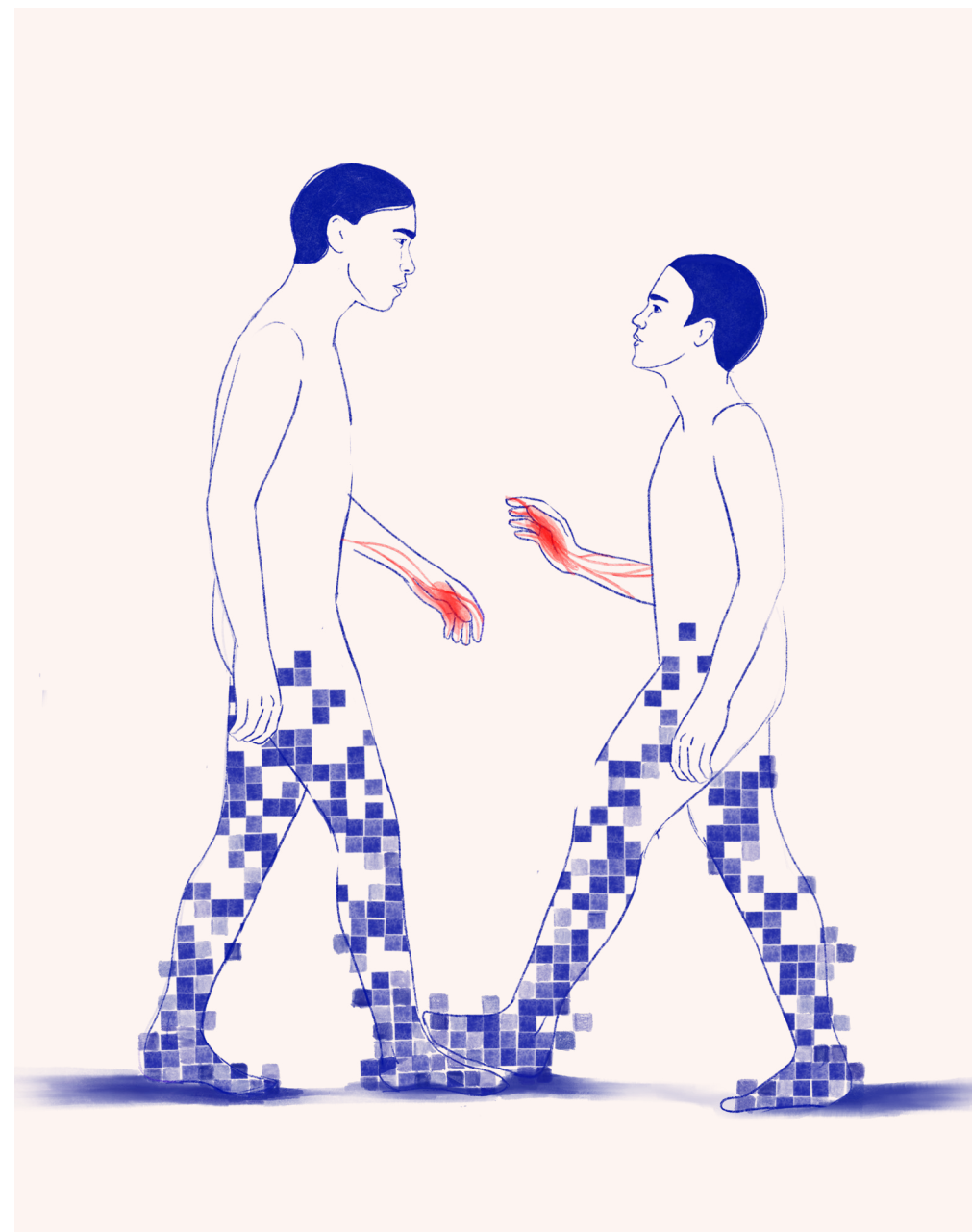
No rest for weary eyes, then. His quarry moves on, so he must do likewise.

On the panoramic display within his helmet, everything flashes with unnecessary exuberance. Laser beams and all manners of ammo are almost instantly airborne around

him as adversaries sense a slow-moving target. His synapses amplify their complaints echoing in his overstimulated mind, perhaps in the hope he might hear them over the drone of the speakers. But he only has ears for his grandchild's voice.

"Dude, can you stop dying?" the boy snaps, half-turning to look down on him from his snipe perch, in his unsettling comic-book character guise – a jumble of colours, metal, fur and gadgets.

"At my age, I'm dodging it every day, young man" is the response on the tip of his tongue, but he bites down on it, both metaphorically and, alas, verily as he finds himself once again ripped from the presence of his grandson and rematerialises over a ledge. One wrong step and his avatar would unceremoniously plummet into the void between the platforms, costing their team another demerit.



Barely evading a hail of digital lead, he manages to catch up with him again, further afield over a precarious outcrop. Good camping ground, those with a sharpshooter specialisation would call it.

Instead, the other player whirls around and barks: "Why are you following me?"

"Hello, Leo. Nice place for a day out...", he says while ducking to ward off a ricochet.

"Grandpa..." A hint of accolade in his intonation as he recognises the voice of the only relative ever to have shown interest in his hobbies. But he quickly readopts his online persona. "FFS, don't real name me here! You can read my tag, no?"

"Ah, the text wafting above your head. Yes. Drifter999 – lovely ring to it. I just wanted to see how you enjoyed the Christmas present I got you."

"Well, thanks, okay? But you shouldn't, like, shadow me. And we're losing!"

"I noticed." He can see their observation post getting gradually encircled by hostile markers on the mini-map. They don't have much time to talk. "In fact, I was hoping to invite you to my 70th birthday. You don't seem to read my messages."

"Literally no-one texts anymore... unless they're ancient," Leo scoffs, peering nervously over the edge of their elevated position. They are closing in.

"So I tried reaching you in here..."

"Fine, grandpa! If you promise to stop spamming my team."

He quickly scans the terraced room: too much light, too many people, little in terms of cover.

And drop the robot outfit! It's so vanilla." He spins to face the foe, his final words drowned out in frantic gunfire.

Ding.

Though the doorbell is within and he outside, the analogue sharpness of its tin gong still feels like an ice cube touching his ear lobe.

The door opens with a heavy creak, the threshold assaulting his feet with an unexpected tactile barrier. He quickly scans the terraced room: too much light, too many people, little in terms of cover. Worse, momentarily everyone pivots to him, flashing smiles, all lips, teeth, gum – and pupils fixated upon his details and imperfections, without customisable skins or filters for protection.

He shuffles into the family circle of uncles, aunties, neighbours and friends. No floating user tags to salve the awkward expectation of recalling actual faces and names. Some look familiar, other less so. Is it time for introductions? Some formality is called for, yes, but until how many rounds of dialogue? Hands extend in greeting towards his sweaty palms, which he quickly wipes on his t-shirt. No armour here to shield his maladroitness floundering. Perspiration pearls down his temples as words fly about like bullets, accompanied by the piercing gaze of expectant interlocutors. Is there no way to exit this scenario?

A gentle grasp lands on his shoulder. Softly, his grandfather beckons and extends a reassuring arm to guide him to the quietest corner of the dining room.

"I'm so happy you made it, Leopold! Come let's sit over here next to your cousins. Per-

haps you younglings would like to regale us luddites with your exploits in the virtual arena."

Memorial theme parks, Leo recalls, relics of a bygone era for dinosaurial adults with a penchant for what they call 'real experiences'.

"Thanks, gramps. You mean TwoWeeks...", relieved, Leo is almost happy to oblige his grandfather. He marvels as the older man deftly ties more and more adults around the long table into the conversation, and he glances sideways at his peers to see if they may be encouraged, too. Alas, they do not meet his eye and remain submerged in electronic devices or sullen contemplation.

Perhaps for the better, as more sensory onslaught follows in the shape of a cake heaving with candles. The combined warmth of an armada of flames, the shocking cannonade of sparklers, the intrusive scent of extinguished wicks snaking its way into his nostrils. All too much reality for a weekend he would have much rather spent in the comforting solitude of his room. Where his VR helmet lay charging, waiting... summoning him to log out of this world of nosy, emotive human presences.

The gift bestowed upon grandpa with some fanfare nonetheless directs his attention back to the present. A voucher for the latest rejuvenation treatment, promising a chance to regain much of his mental acuity and physical rigour.

After the compulsory rituals of gratitude, he

surprises his grandson by turning to him, positively beaming. "I might even get my licence back and self-drive a vehicle, with an actual steering wheel, at one of the race-courses!" Memorial theme parks, Leo recalls, relics of a bygone era for dinosaurial adults with a penchant for what they call 'real experiences'.

Grandpa nudges him playfully. "I'll take you for a spin on the tarmac where once living legends competed, for trophies one could touch. You get to pick the car."

"Is it even safe for you to do this? Out here, no respawn points – you only have one life..." "That's why you've got to live it, child. Give it a few weeks, and these... upgrades will make me quick as the wind again."

Tick-tock.

With the hindsight of the months that followed, their advance into the top tier league feels like an inevitable march of destiny – a path carved through a long string of victories into the server's hall of fame. For their rivals, even losing to a worthy opponent drops collectables and loot boxes, so a steady stream of challengers is assured. Surveying today's procedurally generated battlefield from their customary high ground, grandpa clears his throat: "How about «Let loose the hounds of war»? I'm running short of bombastic one-liners."

"No worries. We're not short of achievements to unlock," Leopold says. "But leave some hits for my friends, okay? They're not equipped with your kind of reflexes..."

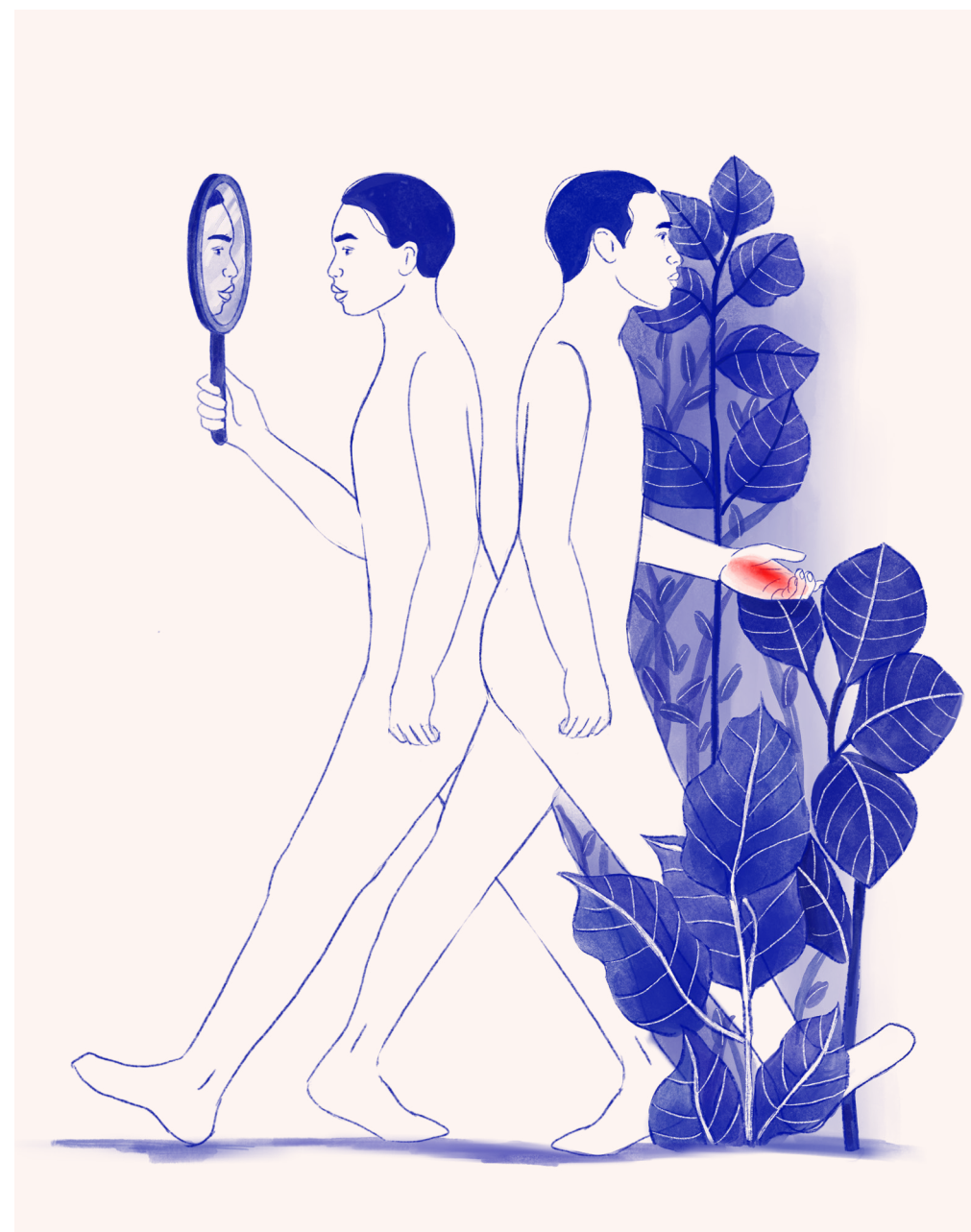
"With age comes wisdom," the vanilla robot winks. Leo's mask signals an eyeroll emoji as he shoulders his weapon. "OK... Zoomer999."

ALL IN ITS RIGHT PLACE

written by Blue Book Foresight Hub

The train's repetitive rumble made me fall back into thoughts of the outside world. As much as I try, I cannot imagine the chaos and confusion in the frantic minds of the outsiders, the constant rat race, the greed, the self-centered me, me, me. How could people lead fulfilling, meaningful lives while

thinking only of themselves? My whole upbringing, my whole being seems to revolt against the idea. I can understand that their trains might be faster, or their technology more advanced, but this pales in comparison to the harmony and glory of our community.





The old lady sitting next to me going to work, and the young man next to her are equal – equal in that they give back to the community precisely as much as they can. This is not something that I believe in, this is something I know, with my whole self. I cannot imagine the stress of having to decide on what to do every day, nor the pressure of worrying whether I will be able to have enough means to survive, let alone strive. No, it makes sense that we don't engage with the world outside. How could we even establish contact, us so sufficient on our own, them constantly yearning for more – we are so immensely different. What incredible luck to have been born right here.



“We believe that in a society for all ages, we should encourage solidarity and equity within and in between generations. One should not calculate efforts between generations and check if there is a symmetric effort between generations. Solidarity implies asking efforts from the stronger ones to help the weakest, efforts from the wealthiest to help the poor, from the healthy people to the sick people. And this regardless of the generation of which they are part.”

written by Herman Fonck

“As much as I try, I cannot imagine the chaos and confusion in the frantic minds of the outsiders, the constant rat race, the greed, the self-centered me, me, me.”

DREAM OF A FUTURE WHERE...



The futures presented here were envisioned by coalitions—working groups of European Commission staff and external experts with varied expertise and diverse viewpoints—who contributed to shaping the strategy for intergenerational fairness. Each future outlines a desirable outcome within a specific policy field identified during the initial scoping phase of the strategy as important topics to address.

The future could look like this: a world where companies produce safe and sustainable products and substances, fitting for a Circular Economy, in line with EU goals, including those embedded in the Green Deal. This includes the Circular Economy Action Plan, Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability, and Zero Pollution Action Plan. In this world, companies avoid aggressive marketing practices that fuel overconsumption, prioritizing quality and sustainability over quantity and profits. They produce in line with consumers' needs and within planetary boundaries, avoiding the environmental impact of fast fashion and fast tech. Examples of policies and instruments that could make a positive difference include Responsible Business Conduct, where everyone is aware of the negative impact of their consumption and consciously understands how to limit their impact within planetary limits.

Currently, we are in a global system that places material overconsumption at the center of obtaining economic growth. However, we could change this by restructuring the current system through diplomatic dialogue and long-term education, involving both policymakers and scientists. We could shift from material overconsumption to enough and sustainable consumption, prioritizing high quality over quantity.

We could also prioritize the realization of the Green Deal, delivering on the targets and revisions promised under the Circular Economy Action Plan and the Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability. These efforts would contribute to sustainable and safe consumption. Additionally, we could strengthen accountability mechanisms for companies in case of non-compliance, unsustainable business and marketing practices, and non-disclosure of information about their products throughout their whole life-cycle.

This would foster qualitative production and sales of products that fit within planetary boundaries, helping to put an end to overconsumption. It would guarantee the safety and sustainability of substances and products throughout their whole life-cycle, contributing to intergenerational fairness and upholding human rights across all generations. It would also educate and empower citizens to make informed and responsible consumption choices.

Ultimately, it would feel like a world where people can trust

each other, instead of being forced to compete, and everybody can have enough to live sustainably.

Picture a future where different generations have access to and live together in affordable and inclusive housing as a basic human right. Imagine a neighbourhood where people of all ages and incomes live, care and grow together.

Homes are flexible, designed for multigenerational living, with shared spaces that foster connection. Residents can move between nearby units as their family size or needs change, staying rooted within their community.

Generations support one another, youth assist with for example technology, while older neighbours help in community shared agriculture, offer career guidance, tell stories to children. Rent and costs are capped / adjusted based on income, leaving nobody behind.

Every street combines economic and age diversity by design, creating a resilient, inclusive neighbourhood where belonging is built into the structure itself.

Current and future generations benefit from equal basic living and economic standards and opportunities. Imagine a world where everyone, regardless of background, has equal access to housing and employment opportunities throughout life. Stable jobs and basic income, inclusive neighbourhoods and supportive policies ensure that no one is excluded based on where they come from or their socioeconomic background.

A strong public housing sector offers affordable, high-quality homes, blended across income levels, keeping housing costs low and communities diverse. Housing is no longer a speculative asset but a basic right. People live without fear of displacement or rising costs, supported by a universal basic income that covers essential monthly needs, including rent, food, energy.

Fair taxation on both income and capital gains helps to close the wealth gap between generations, creating a more just and balanced economy where prosperity is shared and housing is about living in dignity, not leveraging luxury.

Think about a world where... education is a continuous, adaptive, and inclusive process. Generations exchange knowledge through schools, universities, and community programs, actively imagining and shaping their preferred futures together. Education fosters learning across cultural and age divides, develops the capacity to anticipate change, and prepares everyone to face crises, new technologies, and evolving job markets.

We are now in a system where education is rigid and politically deprioritized. Standardized curricula limit personal growth, vocational training is undervalued, and drop-out rates remain high. Adult learning is rare, and innovation is underfunded.

We could redesign learning as a lifelong, future-oriented, and inclusive journey. Integrating futures literacy and visioning exercises into co-designed curricula, practical hubs, flexible assessments, and intergenerational mentorship would empower learners of all ages to explore alternative scenarios and co-create their preferred futures.

It would result in resilient societies where knowledge and opportunity are shared across time.

Dream of a future where... quality, affordable basic services (housing, health, education, pension, etc.) are universally accessible, ensuring equality and non-discrimination based on age or any other grounds.

Comprehensive income security and strong social protection floors guarantee zero poverty and provide a reliable safety net for all. Access to vital spaces and services is a fundamental right, universally upheld.

Universal 'right to thrive' - an expansion of the Letta right to stay empowers individuals with the security and freedom essential for a dignified life and active participation.

Policymaking is responsive and participatory, aligning with people's needs and values.

A sense of enoughness—abundance—guides societies; not material excess, but a collective understanding that we already have and are enough. Solidarity manifests as an underlying value that drives policy and social interaction.

The inherent value of equality, non-discrimination and the rights of all generations, including younger and older persons, are fully recognized and championed.

'We could redesign learning as a lifelong, future-oriented, and inclusive journey.'

“BLUEPRINTS FOR TOMORROW”



The visions that follow were shared by European citizens who took part in the visioning phase of the strategy for intergenerational fairness. Through their contributions to the Citizens Engagement Platform and the OurFutures project, they helped spark and sustain the collective visions on Europe's future and the possibilities it holds for all generations.

Storytelling initiatives: Hearing Everyone's voice

written by Samuel Ďuriš

“ To understand each other across generations we first need to actively listen to each other understand our needs wants, desires, experience expertise, wisdom, visions and dreams. It is important that the EU will provide further funding and incentives for the storytelling initiatives across generations. With the power of our stories we can build a stronger and more welcoming Europe. Everyone of us is a living library that can inspire people with their story. People need to start actively listening to each other talking to each other inspiring each other. The EU should actively support University researchers, NGOs and individuals dealing with the topic of storytelling living libraries and intergenerational solidarity.

The simple life

written by Citizen on #OurFutures

“ Several small homes have been built for the many singles, while the large homes are designed for housing communities, multi-generational families and for the vulnerable and vulnerable who benefit from being part of a larger community.”

Children have a right to their own inclusive future

written by Esther Ribic

“ My vision for the future is an inclusive, diverse society where I feel at home. People listen to each other and accept differences. I think children should take the lead in this, because children are the future and they should be listened to.”

**‘With the power of
our stories we can build
a stronger and more
welcoming Europe. ‘**



Education: The basis for a successful future

written by Esther Ribic

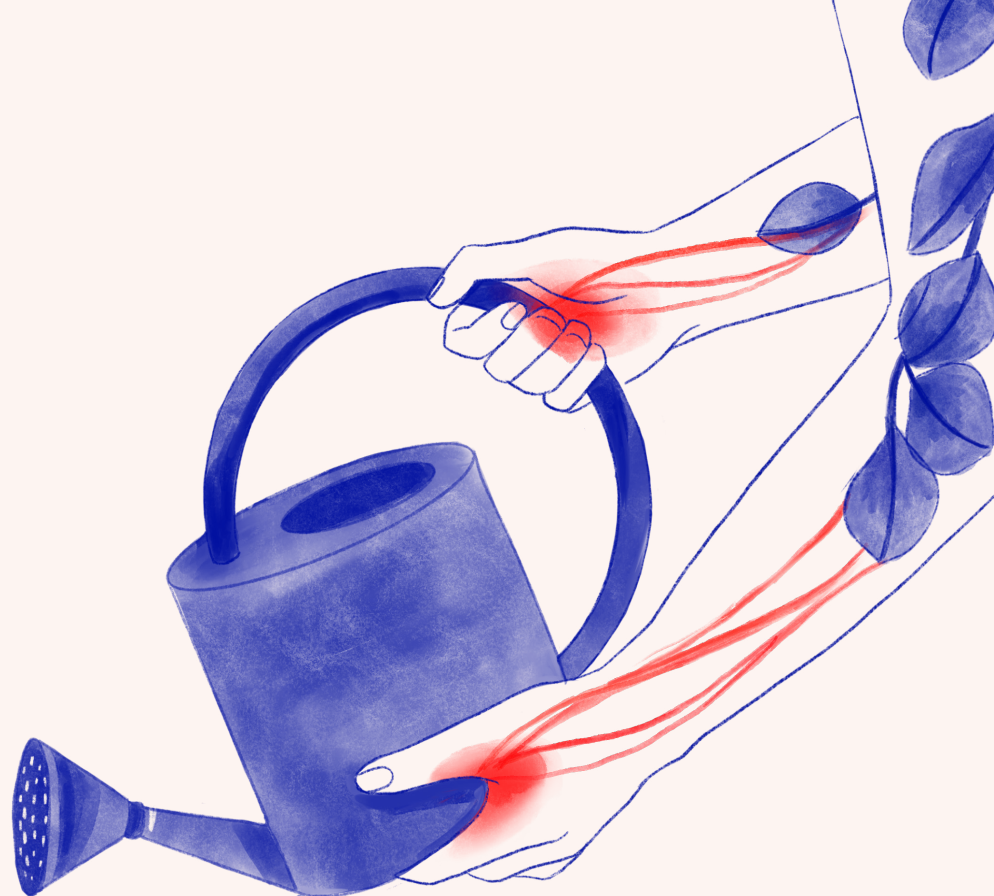
“ Good education for young people today is an investment in a better, fairer, and more resilient future for the next 25 years and beyond. Education provides young people with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in life. Therefore, education is the basis for their future; it lays the foundation for a well-prepared and competent generation capable of meeting the challenges of the future. If all young people in Europe have equal opportunities for quality education, this will also help to achieve more generational justice. This means that all generations are treated fairly and everyone, no matter what social or economic environment they come from, gets the support they need to evolve. Through equitable education, we can create an innovative, fairer, and sustainable society where all generations are respected and supported, where social inequalities are reduced and equal opportunities are promoted.

An integral Europe that revives its spiritual roots

written by Esther Ribic

“ Dialogue between generations: Society promotes dialogue between generations and respects the knowledge and experience of older people. Communities are shaped by a sense of connectedness between young and old.”

‘This means that all generations are treated fairly and everyone, no matter what social or economic environment they come from, gets the support they need to evolve.’



03

CARE

The stories that follow were created by European Commission staff, with the additional craft of writing sci-fi and literary work. Inspired by citizens and coalitions envisioning a fairer future for all, these authors bring intergenerational fairness to life, transforming abstract ideals into vivid narratives and lived experiences.

HORIZON IN COMMON

written by Blue Book Foresight Hub

At the Civic Forum, I sit beside my grandmother. We're reviewing the latest climate adaptation plans, co-designed by citizens of all ages. The decisions aren't easy, but they're transparent and rooted in the best available knowledge. That's our foundation. She remembers a time when the future was

something to control with top-down strategies trying to lock it in. But today, we treat it more like a shared horizon, shaped by evidence, memory, and care. We accept uncertainty, but we don't ignore it. We shape flexible strategies together.



Before any major decision, we hold Nature Consultations. Scientists, artists, and citizens, young and old, come together to interpret signals from ecosystems as part of our democratic process. We ask: What's right for those who come after us? What does the living world need to thrive? We treat our natural environment as a partner to work with, not a landscape to dominate.

Gran says our institutions have changed. We govern now through a balance of voice and structure, assemblies, local initiatives, and accountable institutions working in concert. Fairness doesn't stop at income or identity. The carbon budget is shared between generations. Digital access is a common right. And care flows through age-inclusive systems. Technology is not worshipped. Every major innovation is reviewed by intergenerational panels. We've learned that caution is not resistance, it's a form of respect.

The European Union I'm part of is a strong, cooperative voice, but clear about its values, building agreements that last while not shying away from disagreement when equity, climate, or peace are at stake. The future used to feel distant. Now, I see it in every decision we make.

Peace and well-being for all

"The future should be peaceful, and nations should work together to ensure peace and well-being for all, but also for future generations. We should also work together to provide future generations with a healthy environment, sufficient resources and biodiversity just as we have inherited from generations before us. We should act immediately to combat climate change and take concrete and effective action to ensure the efficient use and safeguard the earth's resources."

written by anonymous author
from #OURFUTURE

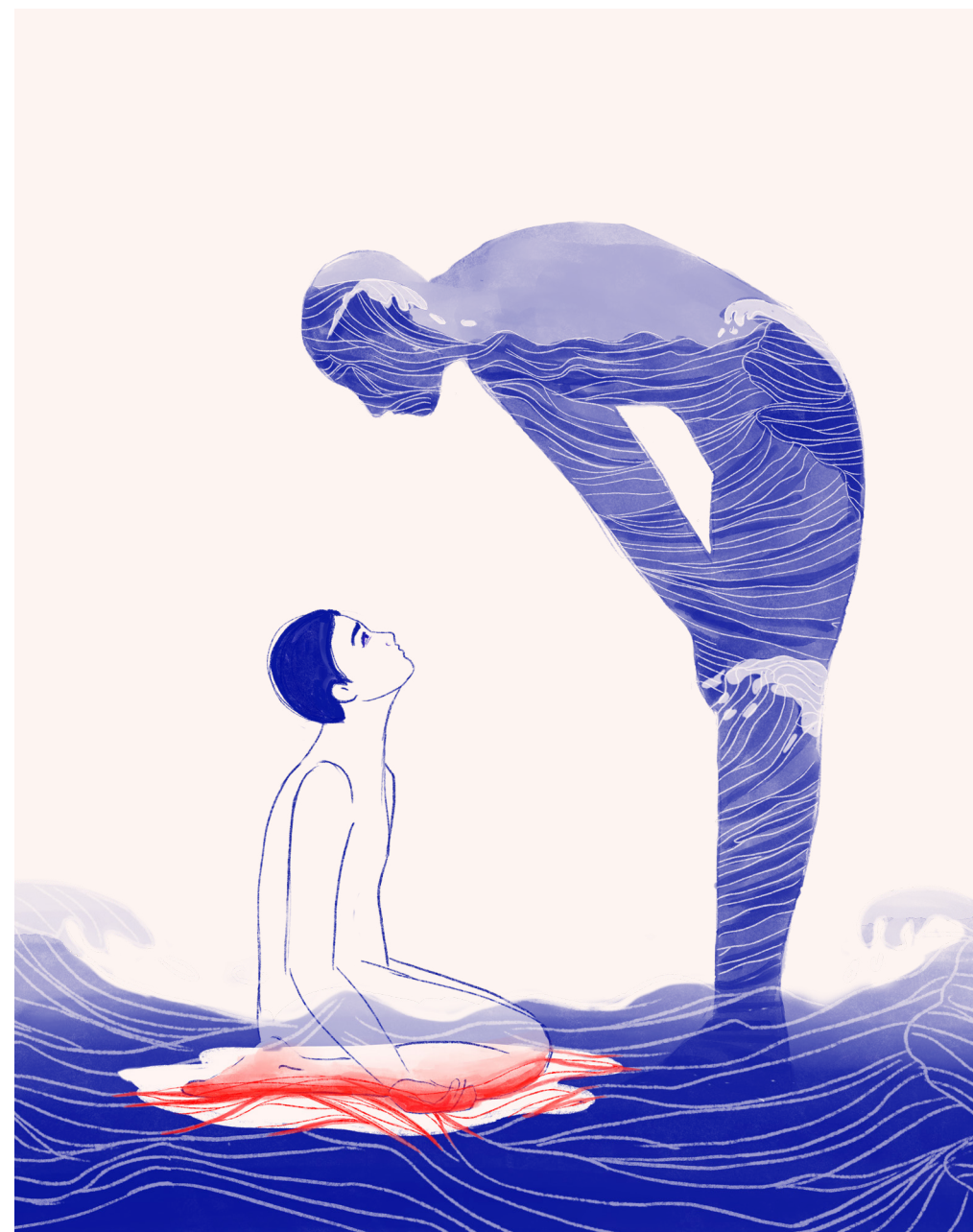
"But today, we treat it more like a shared horizon, shaped by evidence, memory, and care. We accept uncertainty, but we don't ignore it. We shape flexible strategies together."

THE RIVER, THE GIRL AND THE OLD MAN

written by Naouma Kourti

The river was concerned. It looked around and saw death and desperation. Long gone were the clear and fresh mountain waters in which life thrived and proliferated. The waters were now sludgy and smelly, the riverbank's once vivid green color had given way to a pale mixture of plastic. The riverbed was full of all sorts of rubbish. The remaining fish complained that there was no

place to spawn, and their babies grew handicapped. Passing birds didn't stop to nest, and the permanent bird inhabitants were significantly reduced because there were fewer fish, and they were often toxic. Once chatty and excited frogs had become lethargic and inactive, and river turtles suffered from new diseases that old turtles didn't know how to treat.



One evening, before they went to rest, all the river creatures met together. "Our habitat has become unbearable; we are dying here, and there is no future for us," they all said to the river. "Humans keep throwing their waste, things that don't belong to the river. Soon enough, there will be no space for us in here, and we will have no place to go," some of them added.

"Humans are many, and they're not our friends anymore. You have to talk to them before it's too late, and we die out"

The river listened quietly to all the complaints and sighed. With its big eyes, it watched its children's every move and expression. It was worried but tried to play down the concerns. "It's not the first time we're in difficulty. Remember that old glacier as it melted? It was melting for many years. My waters became icy and murky, but we withstood it and even gained new members in our community. And the other time when huge rocks came down from the big rain and hindered the flow for years, I patiently moved around and worked my way through the trees and made a new bed for you to live," the river said skeptically. "Humans are many, and they're not our friends anymore. You have to talk to them before it's too late, and we die out," the river creatures retorted vehemently.

The river thought about this and did nothing for many years, waiting to see what would happen. As things got worse, and complaints increased, it asked the cloud, "What do you

see from up there that I don't see from down here? Are my brother rivers happier than me?"

The cloud answered, "Your brother rivers are worried like you. They also feel they need to protect their children from intoxicating and diminishing and drowning in human rubbish."

"I remember a time when humans spent time at my banks. They bathed, played, and laughed, and even fished and caught crabs, and we didn't mind because we all prospered and thrived. Where are they now?" the river asked.

"Oh, they stay in their cities and towns. They take their water from deep in the earth and throw their sewage and rubbish into rivers and lakes. They don't seem to care much about others, whether it's a river like you or a cloud like me. They don't even care about the big blue sea, which has so generously granted them the land on which they live," the cloud continued with bitterness.

The river was very skeptical and thought again for many years, then decided and said to its children, "Yes, I shall talk to humans. I'm sure they will understand."

So, the river talked to the cloud and asked it to bring loads of rain so that it could grow out of its banks and go to meet the people in their towns and cities. The cloud did so, and on its way to the town, the river took all the dirt and rubbish, dead fish, and sleepy frogs with it to show humans the problems they were causing with their irresponsible behavior.

However, the river noticed that humans ran away from it, some even built fences and dikes and sandbanks to keep it at bay. Disappointed, the river went back to its bed

and, on its way, pulled plastic and mortar and trillions of other rubbish from the dirty human cities. It was disdainful. The complaints of the river creatures became even louder and more exacerbated.

So, the river became angry and entered more houses, and even completely destroyed some.

So, the river asked the cloud again to bring even more rain so that it could reach the humans, even as they were running away. The cloud was happy to do so because it was full of dirt itself and rained with all its power. It rained so hard that the river and the cloud became almost one watery mass that ran out of the banks and overcame all obstacles, forcefully going to meet the humans. Once again, the river carried the dirt that people had thrown into it, just to make sure humans understood its problems.

It was night, and people were still asleep when they heard the river and the cloud knocking on their doors. They became terrified and tried to escape and hide, and none wanted to listen to the river. So, the river became angry and entered more houses, and even completely destroyed some, taking some people to its bed to show them the little deformed fish and crabs. The next day, as the dirty waters had reached the top of the houses, the humans thought that this flood was the worst and most traumatic experience of their lives, as they had lost everything.

The river, still miserable, flowed farther to

reach as many people as possible. But then it heard the sobbing of a girl. The river noticed that the girl was almost as unhappy as itself and stopped around her, as if the girl stood on a little island.

"You're not running away from me like the others," the river wondered.

"I lost my goldfish. Have you taken it?" she replied, sobbing.

"Maybe," the river replied. "I'm taking all that I can find to show humans how dirty and uninhabited I've become and how unhappy and desperate I feel."

"I feel the same," said the girl. "My goldfish was my pride and company, but you took it as you entered our house."

"If I help you find your goldfish, will you help me become clean and beautiful once again?" the river asked.

The girl didn't exactly know how she could help, but she agreed, and so they started looking for the goldfish. The river showed a little orange fish in its waters, suffocating, and pulled it out, handing it to the girl, who thanked it gratefully. As they continued their walk, they found an old man who couldn't run to escape, so he waited there to welcome his death by the muddy waters of the angry river. But the river stopped in front of him and spoke:

"Old man, I'm not here to kill you; rather, I'm here to ask for your help."

The old man, almost blind and immune to human desires, was surprised that he could understand the river's voice so clearly in his head and could feel the river's pain so strongly in his heart. He remembered the years when, as a child, he played at the waters of the river, bathed, fished, and felt sad that his grandchildren could not do the

same. So, he asked how an old man who could hardly see, hear, and walk could be of any help.

“No matter that you’re old, your heart and mind are open, just like this little girl’s,” said the river.

They opened their hearts to the river and listened to it.

The old man, who could hardly see, hear, and walk, pulled all his strength together, stood up, and took the girl by the hand, while she was holding a jar with her goldfish in the other. He started walking among the waters, while the river was making space and dry land for them to walk. People watched the miracle and understood that the river was alive, just like themselves, and that the river could choose to allow them to live or to let them perish in its murky waters. They opened their hearts to the river and listened to it.

As more people joined the old man and the girl, the bigger the dry piece of land became, and it continued to grow. People made a pact with the river and its waters, and the waters of the sea, and the glaciers of the high mountains, and the cloud up in the sky, never to pollute them again. And the waters agreed to withdraw and free the land for their friends, the humans, to live their lives in mutual friendship and respect.

“In the context of the impending climate catastrophe, intergenerational justice means for me above all an effective climate and environmental protection. Only by massively reducing CO2 emissions, increasing the CO2 tax, and eliminating climate-damaging subsidies can the basis for living space for future generations be created.”

written by Jagoda Pokryszka

“I remember a time when humans spent time at my banks. They bathed, played, and laughed, and even fished and caught crabs, and we didn’t mind because we all prospered and thrived. Where are they now?” the river asked.’

LET'S DIVE INTO A WORLD WHERE..

The futures presented here were envisioned by coalitions—working groups of European Commission staff and external experts with varied expertise and diverse viewpoints—who contributed to shaping the strategy for intergenerational fairness. Each future outlines a desirable outcome within a specific policy field identified during the initial scoping phase of the strategy as important topics to address.

Let's dive into a world where people have integrated preparedness to a point that it becomes part of the small talk repertoire. Hello, how are you preparing today? That way information about the needs to prepare, the preparation done as well as who is preparing for what is permanently distributed. Preparation groups form around various topics.

Living in peace and security seems to be a universal aspiration/quest, as conflicts and wars have no boundaries – they affect all people across all generations. Yet, the world in the 21st century seems to be less and less safe place despite the rules-based international order and presence of such institutions, such as the UN. We're surrounded by the ongoing wars in Europe and other continents, the still-present nuclear threat, the looming irreversible catastrophe of climate change, risk of machines slipping out of human control, finally – tendency of 'weaponization of everything'. Even the sky, once a source of lofty dreams, peace, and inspiration, no longer seems safe. How does one want to have children and continue living in such a world?

And yet, big changes start from small actions. Thus, instead of being shackled by fear or waiting for someone to protect and save us from all evils, every person of goodwill can do their part to make this world a safer and a better place for all of us and for future generations. Every day presents us with unique opportunities for that: you may do no harm, you may stop the wrongdoings. You may be a statesman/ statewoman, or you may be just an ordinary person. Whoever you are, or wherever you sit, you can bring your fair share. If you agree, sign our Manifesto: I CARE.

'Even the sky, once a source of lofty dreams, peace, and inspiration, no longer seems safe. How does one want to have children and continue living in such a world?'

Other than describing a preferable future, the coalition on Preparedness, Peace & Security, inspired by its vision, has also developed the following story:

The UFFF Model

The world governed by the UFFF Model is a society where communication standards are deeply embedded into both social norms and institutional frameworks. Its origins trace back to a tense period following a narrowly averted global conflict—commonly called “the incident.” In the aftermath, widespread social surveillance and collective compliance became widespread, as many accepted some loss of privacy as the price for avoiding future escalation. People and institutions alike agreed that clearer, more respectful communication was essential to preventing another crisis.

Out of this urgency, the UFFF Model was developed as a structured approach to managing dialogue and conflict, emphasizing Upfront, Fair, Firm, and Friendly communication. Initially, it relied on community monitoring and social accountability to encourage adherence. Over time, simple automated tools emerged to help guide people’s interactions, providing feedback and reminders to keep conversations constructive.

The model’s purpose was always clear: to help society transition from conflict toward consensus and cooperation. Its ultimate mission is to become unnecessary—replaced by generations raised with strong skills in empathy, nonviolent communication, and emotional intelligence. These generations are continually reminded of the horrors of the past through testimonies and stories preserved by those who lived through the crisis, fostering intergenerational understanding and vigilance.

From early childhood, education in these soft skills is deeply embedded in curricula, equipping individuals to express disagreement and critique without hostility. This foundation aims to reduce reliance on external enforcement as society matures. Culturally, public discourse now reflects a heightened awareness of the impact of language. Social rituals and institutional norms prioritize respect and clarity. Political negotiations and international relations are conducted with a focus on transparency, emotional intelligence, and de-escalation through measured, empathetic dialogue.

In this world, nations are understood not as singular, monolithic entities but as collections of diverse communities, each with their own moral visions and political values. Individuals can choose where to live based on alignment with these values, supported by systems that help identify ideal locations and assist with relocation, promoting voluntary association and social harmony.

Historical memories of the pre-UFFF era and the near-conflict remain carefully preserved in archives and education. Personal testimonies from those who witnessed the crisis are shared regularly, ensuring that the lessons of the past remain alive and influential.

The UFFF Model - Origin

People say it started with that one conflict — the one that came way too close. Nobody talks about it directly anymore. Just “the incident”, like calling it anything else might tempt history to try again. After that, the UFFF Model wasn’t just a suggestion. It was a survival strategy. There was a real need, and an agreement, to build a communication that was more upfront, fair, firm, and friendly. Because the wrong words — said at the wrong time, in the wrong tone — almost set the world on fire.

Now, everyone walks a little softer. Still says what they mean, but with guardrails. You feel it in the little things: news anchors rerouting their phrasing mid-sentence, politicians addressing rivals like estranged cousins at a family reunion, not enemies. Even the UN debates feel different — like everyone’s been to the same therapist and agreed to at least try. There’s a kind of choreography to it now. A whole vocabulary of disagreement without escalation. You can still be firm. Just not cruel. Not flippant. The kids are better at it than we ever were. They grow up fluent in nonviolent communication — it’s not a course, it’s a whole ecosystem. Disagreement drills in primary school. Empathy labs. Playground mediators. By the time they’re teens, they can de-escalate a shouting match with three well-placed questions and a tone shift. It’s eerie, sometimes — watching them navigate things that would’ve blown up in our faces with nothing but calm curiosity.

Of course, they don't remember what it was like. And part of me worries that human nature has a long memory. That in a few generations, when no one alive felt the heat of the incident, the old reflexes might start creeping back in. But they're trying to prevent that too.

A machine still runs the model — watches tone, structure, escalation potential — nudges everyone gently back into shape. And then there's the Archive: recordings, reflections, fragments from those of us who remember. We speak plainly in those — not to shame, but to warn. They call it ancestor recall. Sometimes our notes are read aloud in classrooms, sometimes sampled in training sims. It's a new form of oral transmission, filtered through a machine, but warm all the same.

If we're lucky, it'll stick. If we're careful, the worst won't repeat.

The UFFF Model at work

I started typing "Can you please just fix this before it breaks again?"

The system flagged it. Tone: borderline Firm-Fair imbalance.

Suggestion: "Try expressing your need without implying blame."

I sighed. Deleted. Rewrote.

"Hey, I noticed the update might cause issues. Could we look at it together?"

Smiley face optional, the system added.

I hit send.

A moment later, the assistant chimed in: "Thank you for communicating Upfront, Fair, Firm & Friendly."

I wanted to throw my phone. Instead, I breathed out through my nose like I'd been taught. And marked the moment down as a win.

Sort of.

The UFFF Model - at home

We were arguing about the dishes. Not really about the dishes, of course — just tired, overlapping days, no space to think.

I said, "You never rinse them properly."

The speaker in the ceiling gave a soft chime. "Consider: Is that Upfront and Fair?"

I closed my eyes. Breathed. Counted to three. Then tried again: "I get stressed when I find food on plates I thought were clean.

Can we figure out a system?"

He looked at me, shoulders still tight — but less so.

"Yeah," he said. "Okay."

Later, when I was brushing my teeth, the mirror lit up.

"Today's UFFF score: 84. Friendly recovery noted." I didn't know whether to be proud or tired. Maybe both.

Ancestors' Warnings

I've always thought of myself as pretty settled. Born here, raised here, worked here. But my daughter's different. She's been talking a lot about moving — not just changing jobs or neighbourhoods, but moving to a whole different part of the country. Somewhere that fits her politics better, she says.

I get it. Our country isn't just one thing anymore. It's like a bunch of little worlds, each with their own rules and ways of seeing things. There's even a system now — a kind of matchmaking for your beliefs and where you might belong. You answer some questions, and it suggests places where you'd feel more at home. Helps with the paperwork, too. Seems like a neat idea.

But what really gets me thinking is how she's been listening to the stories from my generation — the ones who lived through the big mess we call "the incident." We left recordings, notes, reflections — the ancestors' warnings, they call them. We wanted future folks to remember why all this careful talking and choosing matters so much.

Sometimes she listens to those stories out loud with friends, almost like a ritual. I hear them laughing, arguing softly over details, asking what they'd do if they were there.

Here's the twist: she says those stories don't just keep people from making the same mistakes. They also make her question whether staying put is really the point. If people can just pick where to live based on their beliefs, what keeps a community together? What's the glue?

I'm not sure how to answer that.

Maybe it's the stories themselves — the shared memory — that tie us all together, no matter where we end up. Or maybe, in this new world, belonging means something different.

Whatever it is, I'm glad she's thinking about it. And I'm glad we left those voices behind — our little warnings and hopes — so the next ones can find their own way, with a bit more care.

A Care Society

In 2100, humanity has transcended the precarious, extractivist systems of the past. The global economy has evolved into a “Care Economy,” where the primary focus is on nurturing relationships—among humans and with all forms of life. This transformation was catalyzed by a collective realization that the pursuit of profit at the expense of the planet and its inhabitants was unsustainable. Governments, communities, and individuals united to dismantle exploitative structures and replace them with systems that prioritize well-being, equity, and ecological stewardship.

In this new world, every individual can choose to be a “care-maker,” contributing to the collective well-being through various forms of care—be it emotional, physical, ecological, or intergenerational. Care is no longer seen as a commodity but as a fundamental human right and responsibility. Economic activities are organized around the principles of mutual aid, reciprocity, and sustainability, ensuring that resources are shared equitably and that the needs of all life forms are met.

Communities are structured to foster interdependence and solidarity. Urban and rural spaces are designed to facilitate communal living, shared resources, and collaborative problem-solving and decision-making. Education systems emphasize emotional intelligence, ecological literacy, and cooperative skills, preparing individuals to engage in care practices from a young age. Technologies are developed and utilized to enhance human capabilities in caregiving, not to replace them, ensuring that advancements serve the collective good.

Future generations look back with gratitude at the transformative actions taken in the early 21st century. They inherit a world where the exploitation of people and the planet is a distant memory, and where the flourishing of all life is the guiding principle. In this world, care is not just a practice but a way of being, ensuring a harmonious and resilient future for all.

People who choose to care for their own parents, and parents who choose to care for their children are supported to do so, in particular during the early life (including in utero life) of their children, also during their adolescence, and at the end of life of their parents.

On the one hand, collective care refers to the action of collec-

tively taking care and being responsible for caring for someone, or a group of people. This is about the capacity of health professionals to collaborate with each other, with professionals from other sectors, as well as with families and community members (cross-sectoral integrated health and social care, population responsibility). This also refers to health in all policies initiatives. On the other hand, collective care refers to the action of taking care of a group of people, beyond the current doctor-patient one-on-one model in today's conventional care. This means an enhanced knowledge of collective healing and care (e.g. family constellations, collective art therapy, etc.).

‘Care is no longer seen as a commodity but as a fundamental human right and responsibility.’

Healthcare

Think of a reality where more than 5 generations live simultaneously. Life expectancy is increasing rapidly, so that people born in the eighties might be able to live up to 150 years old. The number of healthy life years has also increased, thanks to combined efforts that created healthy living environments and food systems (biodiversity, toxic-free products, healthy soils, clean air, social support...), supporting healthy habits (physical activity, healthy diets, social connections...).

AI has disrupted many areas: jobs as we knew them are not running human lives anymore. As many basic needs are supported and covered by technologies, human beings can choose to engage in meaningful activities.

In the area of health and healthcare, many highly specialized healthcare tasks are handled by affordable high technology, with healthcare professionals combining medical knowledge, soft skills and a great knowledge of patient experience, to attend to the patients' needs during a medical procedure and healthcare pathways.

However, with the technological advancement in medical care, many care tasks can often be easily performed remotely and autonomously, enabling more home care. Families can choose



to take care of their dependent older adult (or dependent family member), possibly with the support of healthcare practitioners with high relationship skills. This is a future where technology supports and makes more space and time for human connections.

At the beginning of life, parents can choose to be truly there for their child, first in utero and then in early life. Parents feel secure and peaceful enough to provide their children with emotional and physical security, creating a strong and trustful bond from the early beginning. Parents have time for their children (cooking healthy food, breastfeeding if they wished so, playing...) as well as a support living environment (house, community, inter-generational family). This trustful bond becomes a key element for children later in life, particularly during adolescence.

Currently, older adults in need of long-term care as well as their caregivers, including informal caregivers as well as professionals in LTC facilities or doing home visits, are struggling (loneliness, burn-out, disregard from society...). Formal and informal caregiving is often invisible, undervalued and underpaid. Women handle an important part of it. Financing LTC is also a challenge with the number of older adults outgrowing the number of working-age adults.

We see that parents often struggle to provide their future child or young children with the best chances to live a long, healthy fulfilling life. Environmental and social determinants of health play an important role in the development of children. Children's exposure to hazardous substances in products and pollution of the environment they live in (including from microplastics, endocrine disruptors, forever pollutants and other harmful chemicals) put embryos and children at risk.

What if we worked on the financial dimension of this vision to make it sustainable. ...work on understanding the future of jobs, including rethinking the way formal and informal jobs are valued and the appropriate compensation system.

What if we were able to create supportive environments, and make time for relationships and for nurturing them in every stage of the lifecycle. This would create more and more mentally and physically healthy people, more healthy relationships among families, more healthy relationships among diverse social groups, passing on from a generation to the next.

04 Access to Services

Imagine a world where cross-sectional fairness would be one of the main criteria to plan communities and the development of places. This would reduce inequalities and disparity, guaranteeing a broader access to services like water, sanitation, energy, healthcare, digital services and cultural ones, only to name a few. Imagine a future where infrastructure is made of sustainable materials that won't affect negatively the life of non-human animals and plants, but, on the contrary, will be part of co-creative processes of environmental regeneration. We are envisioning a future where social and environmental justice go hand in hand. Imagine a future where communities can rely on resilient transport systems and infrastructure to ensure access to other essential services even in the face of potential disasters and shocks.

“BLUEPRINTS FOR TOMORROW”

The visions that follow were shared by European citizens who took part in the visioning phase of the strategy for intergenerational fairness. Through their contributions to the Citizens Engagement Platform and the OurFutures project, they helped spark and sustain the collective visions on Europe's future and the possibilities it holds for all generations.

From Ageism to Equality: Building a Union for All Ages

written by Vera Hoermann

“ Elena, 72, arrives at a city planning meeting with ideas from decades of community work. But no one asks for her input. Her immense and hard-earned experience is dismissed as “outdated.” This isn’t the future we promised. Ageism quietly undermines older people’s rights and contributions. It limits access to employment, lifelong learning, housing, healthcare, and participation in public life. Despite slowly growing awareness, it remains overlooked in policy and practice. But imagine a different reality. Elena co-leads the planning meeting, bringing her insights into sustainability and inclusion. She mentors younger colleagues and takes part in EU-funded initiatives that celebrate intergenerational cooperation. She is respected, not sidelined. This future is possible but only if we act.

An EU Action Plan to Combat Ageism to Ensure a Sustainable Future for All Ages and Generations Based on Solidarity

written by Maciej Kucharczyk

“ In an intergenerationally fair future, people of all ages should enjoy equality in daily life – education, employment, clean air and water, accessible housing and transport, universal, affordable and person-centered healthcare, adequate income, inclusive civic and political participation... For older people, this means access to lifelong learning, meaningful employment, sustainable and adequate old-age income, age-friendly environments, goods and services, including the choice between both traditional and digital solutions. All generations should be equally valued, their perspectives heard and respected. In a truly inclusive society, ageing should be celebrated – not seen as a burden – and ageism combated like any other form of discrimination that hinders individual well-being, solidarity and social cohesion.

A green and fair future

written by Citizen on #OurFutures

“ In 2040, I want a world where environmental sustainability and social justice go hand in hand. Our cities are full of green spaces, clean energy sources power all areas of life, and innovative technologies support a climate-neutral way of life. Education, healthcare and housing are accessible to all people, regardless of their social or economic background.”

Together we are strong and can make things happen for a better and social world

written by Citizen on #OurFutures

“ A future without wars, equal opportunities for everyone, social ties renewed again, a “connection” between the different generations, a return to the sources, namely dialogue with family, between friends, discoveries of others, of other cultures, caring for and respecting our neighbors, believing in the noble values of our ancestors...”

CALL TO ACTION

Join the conversation

We warmly invite you to **share your future snapshot** stories and take part in shaping a collective vision of a fair future across generations. Your stories can inspire others to reflect, build on these ideas, and carry this vision forward.

We will bring together a selection of the shared stories into a **follow-up edition** that will be shared widely.

Please send your stories to the Citizens Engagement Platform
<https://citizens.ec.europa.eu/intergenerational-fairness>

