

Infrastructure for Next Generation EU (Poster)

Extended abstract

Background

Nobel laureate Ellen Johnson Sirleaf observed: “*Future generations will judge us not by what we say, but what we do.*” The European Union has taken concrete action in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic through **NextGenerationEU** – an €800 billion recovery and resilience plan designed to build a stronger, greener, more digital and more equitable Europe. The programme supports reforms and investments across EU member states, prioritising climate-neutral infrastructure, digital public services, health system resilience and youth empowerment. Its core ambition is to demonstrate that the needs and aspirations of young Europeans are central to shaping Europe’s post-pandemic transformation.

Infra4NextGen (I4NG) – a project funded by the European Commission – responds directly to this ambition by harnessing Europe’s leading social science research infrastructures to strengthen the evidence base underpinning both NextGenerationEU and EU youth policy. This poster presents current and forthcoming outcomes of this project.

Infra4NextGen: Strategic Rationale

Europe benefits from a rich ecosystem of high-quality cross-national social survey data and research infrastructure services. However, despite their relevance, these resources are often fragmented, difficult to locate, and not aligned with specific EU policy priorities. Policymakers, researchers, educators, and citizens therefore face challenges in identifying and applying existing evidence to inform decision-making.

Infra4NextGen (I4NG) directly addresses this gap by consolidating, harmonising and, where appropriate, re-purposing existing data and services to meet the evidence needs of NextGenerationEU and EU youth policy. The project delivers services tailored to EU missions across the five pillars of NextGenerationEU, reorganising data around societal challenges rather than individual survey programmes to significantly reduce fragmentation and improve accessibility.

This represents a transformational evolution in the mission of social science research infrastructures: moving beyond traditional data provision and training to proactively supporting EU policy design, monitoring and delivery. In addition to enhancing use of existing evidence, Infra4NextGen generates new rapid-response data through the CRONOS-3 cross-national online panel, enabling timely insights in areas where evidence gaps remain.

By equipping stakeholders with improved tools and knowledge to mobilise social science evidence, I4NG strengthens Europe’s capacity to deliver a recovery and resilience agenda that is grounded in people’s experiences and responsive to societal needs.

Thematic Focus

The project directly supports the five NextGenerationEU pillars:

- *Make it Green*
- *Make it Digital*
- *Make it Healthy*
- *Make it Strong*
- *Make it Equal*

Within each theme, I4NG also advances priorities of the EU Youth Strategy, including active citizenship, social inclusion, and youth empowerment. Importantly, the project goes beyond data analytics to create pathways for youth participation, ensuring young people are engaged as contributors, not only subjects, of policy debate.

Objectives

The project is structured around six objectives that collectively deliver impact for society, policy, and research:

1. Consolidate, harmonise and summarise existing data and services aligned with NextGenerationEU and youth priorities;
2. Increase visibility and access to relevant RI resources for stakeholders across Europe;
3. Engage policymakers, experts and young people in co-developing outputs;
4. Enable youth participation and data-driven engagement with Europe's future;
5. Strengthen capacity among researchers, educators, and analysts to exploit existing and emerging data;
6. Amplify visibility and societal reach of evidence and insights produced.

Project Outputs

Key deliverables include:

- An inventory of relevant questions on each of the five themes already fielded on cross-national surveys aligned with NextGenerationEU priorities. The data sources include the European Social Survey (ESS), European Values Study (EVS), the Generations and Gender Survey (GGS), the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), as well as EU-funded surveys like Eurobarometer and the Eurofound surveys such as the European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS).
- Harmonised and merged data extracts enabling comparative research: the inventory of survey questions is being reviewed to ascertain where data fielded in different surveys can be made more comparable. As such, harmonised and merged extracts from existing datasets are being provided to make existing data more accessible to researchers.
- The CRONOS-3 online panel: new, rapid-response data across multiple European countries on each NextGenEU theme;
- Policy-relevant analytical outputs;
- Deliberative workshops that incorporate young people's perspectives into EU policymaking;
- E-NextGen tool: an educational tool that supports data literacy and public engagement;
- Trainings: Comprehensive training materials related to all project outputs and NextGenerationEU areas, including online training, a series of 17 webinars, nine workshops, three hackathons and a short video series with demonstrations, tutorials/guides and research discussions.

Conclusion

By connecting and transforming Europe's leading social science infrastructures, Infra4NextGen

creates a sustainable evidence ecosystem to monitor societal change, inform resilience and recovery strategies, and empower the next generation of Europeans.