

Foresight menu

Foresight¹ seems to be on everyone's lips these days – but what is it really and, more importantly, how can you use it in your own work? This "menu" is designed to help policymakers understand and leverage foresight for more effective strategy-building and decision-making.

Foresight is about **thinking long-term** to make smarter choices now. It is a collective effort to look beyond the present and consider what could happen in the future. Foresight isn't about gazing into a crystal ball, but a way to methodically broaden our perspective and prepare for different possible futures scenarios.

There are many reasons and ways to engage in long-term thinking for policymaking. This menu showcases the various **goals and approaches** of foresight in policy contexts, featuring tools and processes that the EU Policy Lab can offer. Because looking into the future actually means looking into:

Change today



GOAL Identify and map drivers of change, trends, emerging issues, values, actions, actors, narratives and perspectives in the present that could impact the future.

TOOLS (Mega)trend analysis; Horizon scanning; Delphi survey; Futures triangle; STEEPL; System mapping

Change over time



GOAL Discover and understand possible developments and changes over time, consider their impacts and think about possible transitions.

TOOLS Emerging Issue Analysis; Futures wheels; X-curves; Backcasting; Three horizons; Mega-trends engagement tool; Dialectical analysis; Poly-crisis exploration tool

Assumptions & worldviews



GOAL Deepen understanding of our images of the future by uncovering underlying assumptions and worldviews.

TOOLS Causal layered analysis (CLA)

Alternative futures



GOAL Create, explore and experience alternative future possibilities and narratives.

TOOLS Scenario building; Scenario exploration system (SES); Futures triangle; Snapshots of the future; Experiential futures; Speculative design; Reference foresight scenarios

Preferences & priorities



GOAL Identify preferable futures or select priorities, and build a future vision to aspire to.

TOOLS Visioning; Prioritization matrices

Options, actions & strategies



GOAL Explore and develop options, actions and strategies in the present to move towards envisioned futures, and test their resilience and adaptability.

TOOLS Backcasting; Roadmapping; Stress-testing; Wind-tunnelling

¹ Foresight – the discipline of exploring, anticipating, and shaping the future in a participatory way – seeks to systematically and rigorously navigate uncertainty and explore possible and preferable futures. Not with the purpose to predict the future, but with the intent to generate a wide variety of views on the future, and understand emerging change and future possibilities.

Foresight processes for policymaking

Foresight tools and approaches can be tailored and used in flexible and adaptable ways to address your policy needs optimally. Below you can find recommended foresight processes (sequences of methodological steps) to serve different policy needs. These proposed sequences are indicative; they can be adapted to specific circumstances and complemented by other tools and methods:

not needed

advisable

required

POLICY NEED / GOAL	DESCRIPTION	PROCESS OUTCOMES
Explore and understand change in complex systems	<p>Uncover underlying drivers and causes of change in complex systems related to policy issues, and discover possible outcomes of change dynamics.</p>	<p>Improved understanding of systemic change and a better capacity to deal with complexity and uncertainty.</p>
Create a shared long-term vision	<p>Develop a clear and compelling vision of a preferred future that can guide policy making. This vision serves as an aspirational goal for where a society or organisation wants to be in the long term.</p>	<p>A common understanding of a long-term vision; alignment between stakeholders on preferred transition and a sense of ownership and co-creation.</p>
Set priorities	<p>Foresight exercises can help to determine which issues are likely to be significant in the future or could be significant across possible alternative futures, and thus should be prioritized in the present.</p>	<p>A common understanding of priorities.</p>

POLICY NEED / GOAL	DESCRIPTION	PROCESS OUTCOMES
Inspire policy options	<p>By exploring possible change and developing alternative futures, foresight can help identify policy options that might not be apparent through traditional analysis.</p>	<p>Generation of new ideas and identification of future possibilities to inspire policy options.</p>
	 Change today  Change over time  Assumptions & worldviews  Alternative futures  Preferences & priorities  Options, actions & strategies	
Test policies for long-term resilience and robustness	<p>Foresight allows for the testing of policy options against possible alternative futures (foresight scenarios). This helps to uncover the various pros and cons of different policy options and to adapt accordingly to ensure that policies are resilient, robust and adaptable to different possible future contexts.</p>	<p>Better resilience, robustness and preparedness and increased capacity to deal with complexity and uncertainty.</p>
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Spot & assess risks and opportunities - early warning	<p>Identifying emerging risks and opportunities is a key goal of foresight, enabling very early preparedness for possible risks and allowing us to capitalise on opportunities.</p>	<p>Increased capacity to deal with uncertainty or surprises.</p>
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Foster coherent long-term policymaking	<p>Foresight exercises can help to ensure that short-term interests of different stakeholder groups are aligned with collective long-term goals, creating coherence between immediate decisions and objectives for the future.</p>	<p>Better stakeholder engagement and a more robust decision-making process.</p>
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EU Policy Lab

The EU Policy Lab is a space for cross-disciplinary exploration and innovation in policymaking. We apply collaborative, systemic and forward-looking approaches to help bringing the scientific knowledge of the Joint Research Centre into EU policymaking.

We experiment with the new, the unprecedented and the unknown. We seek to augment our understanding of the present, challenge and reinvent the way we think about the future.

The EU Policy Lab is also a mindset and a way of working together that combines stories and data, anticipation and analysis, imagination and action. We bring new practical and radical perspectives to tackle complex problems in a collaborative way. Together, we explore, connect and ideate to create better policies.

Explore all our foresight tools and methodologies at the Competence Centre on Foresight's website:



knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/foresight_en

Contact the EU Policy Lab

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