

European Commission  
Joint Research Centre (JRC)



# Scenario Exploration System

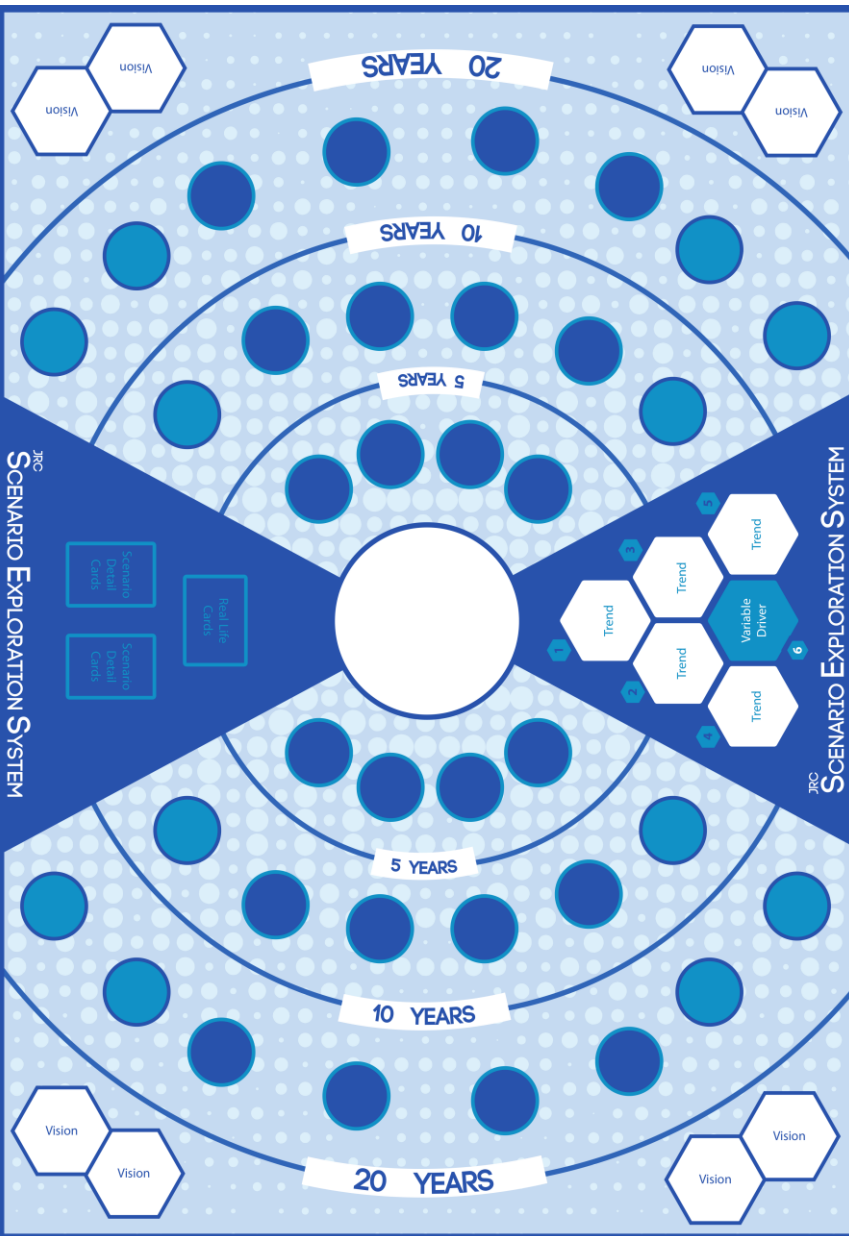


*- A new way to engage with uncertain futures -*

## Overview

### Contact

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# Background

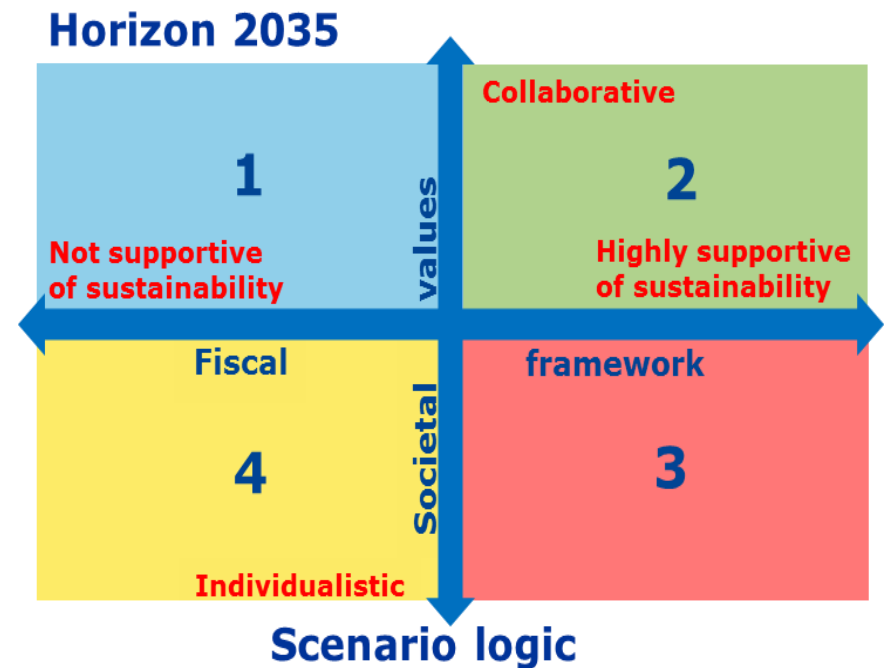
The change of civilisation that we have embarked on is creating a range of consequences that is difficult to fathom. Such an uncertain context makes it essential to help people get a grasp on what possible changes could affect them, how they could come about and what they could do about them. The need to face these combined challenges calls for novel, empowering approaches to prepare the future, accessible to all.

To that end, the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) embarked on an innovative effort combining scenario building and serious gaming techniques. This combined approach makes it possible for any participant to explore plausible alternative pathways to the future from their own perspective and to test any realistic strategy of their choice to reach their desired long-term objectives in a world that changes as players journey into the future.

The engagement platform that was developed can be adapted to any set of scenarios to make it possible to explore any issue of interest to the participants at any level (from global to local).

The first edition of this engagement platform is based on the JRC foresight study [2035: Paths towards a Sustainable EU Economy](#). This study followed a classic scenario building methodology and created four scenarios around societal values and the fiscal framework.

This award winning platform (<http://apf.org/msfw/>) is geared at generating a systemic understanding among participants and is aiming at generating insights on the dynamics of change, future challenges and possible response options. It has been used for policy making at EU level and for corporate strategy development.



# Purpose and principle of the engagement platform

The purpose of the [Scenario Exploration System](#) (SES) is to have participants experience and act through plausible alternative futures, by thinking and conversing systemically outside of their usual frame of reference.

The SES uses two contrasting scenarios to challenge the assumptions of the participants and offer them space to respond to alternative and changing framework conditions.

Over the course of a session in the *Sustainable Transitions* edition of the SES, four *explorers* representing two policy makers, a business and a civil society organization act over three rounds to reach their visions in a 20 year time horizon. After every round, a public voice analyses the actions taken by the other participants and values them with respect to their estimated future impact.

Achieving success takes several forms: wielding the most influence; achieving one's own vision; or winning collectively by how close the game has brought the players to a common goal (e.g. a sustainable future).

The session can be run either to enlarge the frames of reference for participants or to explore specific issues.

In the first mode, participants face unexpected challenges on their journey to achieve their long-term objectives ; they discover their space of freedom and the importance of the systemic elements by exploring two contrasting scenarios.

The second mode functions in the same way, but the scenario specifics, drivers, roles and visions are set in the frame of, and with context from, the selected topic. This increased realism is used to improve preparedness, for strategy development or for "future-proofing" in general.

Forms are used to harvest the contents of each session to support debriefing and discussion. Each session ends up constructing a unique story that is recorded for further analysis.

# Round 1 Example

The Exploration Master will set up the board at the start of each session with the following components:



One scenario circle card and its corresponding detail cards are placed on the board.



Real Life cards are placed face down in the appropriate space.



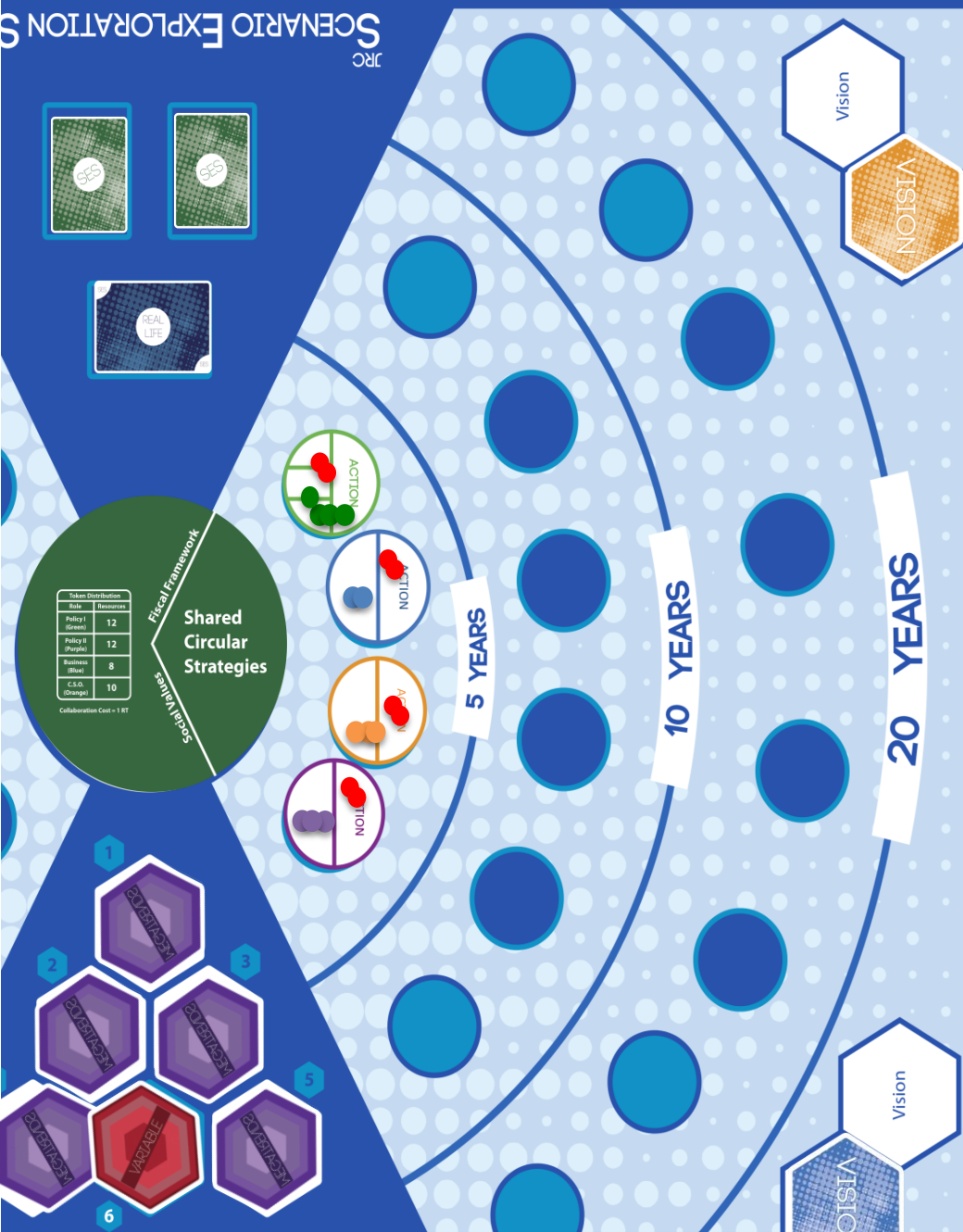
Megatrends placed in the spaces marked 1-5. The variable driver cards are placed face down in space number 6.



All Action cards and Resource Tokens (R.T.s) are handed out.



The Public Voice gets its 30 Future Impact Tokens (F.I.T.s)

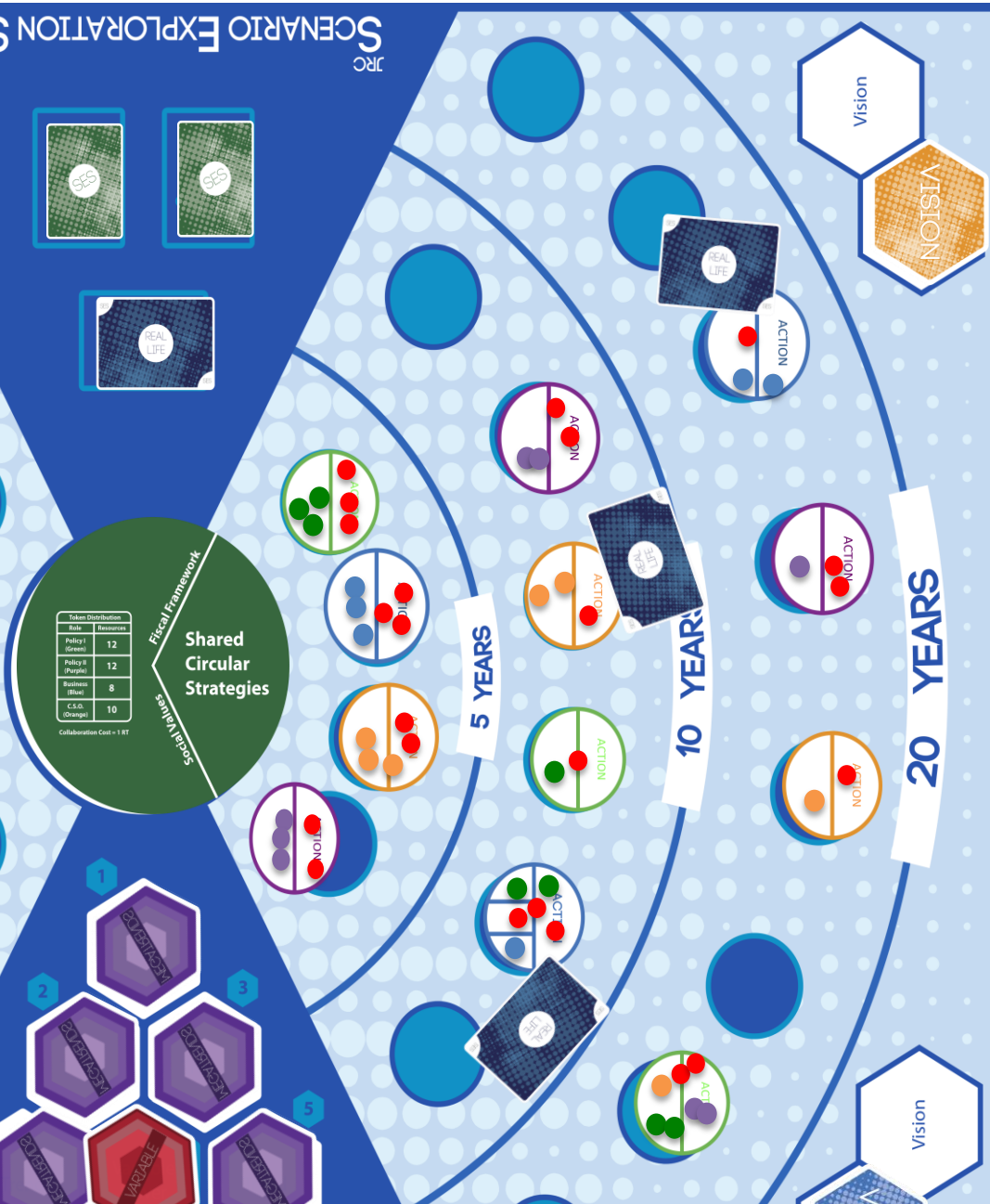


# Phase 1 Example

One complete phase of scenario exploration (round 1-3 completed) can look like the example on the left. The scenario has developed across all three rounds and each detail card has been revealed.

The explorers have acted according to their role, resources, and the vision they want to reach. The Public Voice has determined the influence those actions have had over the course of the exploration.

Note the collaborations in rounds 2 and 3.



<https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/research/foresight/ses>





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