

Foresight

Main messages

- The coronavirus crisis surprised us, even though experts had been warning for years about possible respiratory disease-based pandemics. It has claimed the lives of almost a million people and led to economic, social and psychological hardship across Europe and the world.
- We cannot expect the future to become less disruptive – new trends and shocks will continue to affect our lives and we need to be prepared. At the same time, the European Union must continue to lead the green, digital, and fair transitions, which cut across all policy areas.
- Strategic foresight will help us not only better understand these transformations; it is a call to action to shape the world around us. If we want to be successful and future-proof EU policies, we will need to have all European institutions, especially Member States sharing and supporting this approach.
- The Commission adopted on 9 September 2020 its first annual Strategic Foresight Report – our flagship foresight product. I trust it will offer ample food for thought for fruitful exchanges with all our social partners on how to make our continent more resilient and fairer today and in the future.
- In the report, we explain how the Commission plans to embed foresight into EU policymaking. This is very relevant for our joint work forward. Examples are:
 - We will systematically conduct foresight exercises for all major policy initiatives to help identify potential pathways for the twin transitions.
 - We will build a collaborative and inclusive foresight cooperation and alliances with EU and international institutions and partners, including social partners.
 - Every year, we will publish a forward-looking Strategic Foresight Report, testing issues of critical interest to Europe's future and analysing emerging trends and challenges to inform our policy- and decision-making.
- These reports will aim to feed into the Commission's work programmes and our multiannual programming exercises.
- The coronavirus pandemic has reaffirmed the need to make our policies more evidence-based, future-proof, and centred on resilience. Hence, the 2020 Strategic Foresight Report provides a structural analysis of the EU's resilience along four interrelated dimensions: (i) social and economic; (ii) geopolitical; (iii) green; and (iv) digital.
- For example, a key vulnerability to be exposed by the crisis are deepening inequalities, between poor and rich, young and old, women and men. On the other hand, the foresight report identifies social partners are an important capacity contributing to Europe's social and economic resilience. Through social dialogue, social partners contribute to sustainable and inclusive growth. Such social dialogue is more important than ever as we recover from this crisis.
- The pandemic has not only thrown a sharp light on our vulnerabilities and capacities, but presents also opportunities that the EU cannot afford to miss on the way to the recovery. That is why I am here with you today, to ask you: What opportunities must the EU seize now, in this moment, to strengthen our long-term resilience?

- I invite you to share your views on this first foresight report and engage with the Commission on the next steps. I am also especially interested to hear your recommendations on how we can foster cooperation on future reports and foresight projects.
- The Commission is committed to better coordinating European strategic foresight capabilities across Europe. That is why I intend to launch an EU-wide Foresight Network and believe that the upcoming European Strategy and Political Analysis System (ESPAS) Conference in November 2020 is the right moment to do this. If you would like to participate, please get in touch with us and we will send you an invitation.
- I look forward to a fruitful discussion with you and count on your support in future foresight work.

Defensives

Will foresight make Commission policies fairer?

- The European Union policy-making system is what guarantees fairness.
- However, we need to engage more with citizens.
- We increasingly understand that the consultation part of our regulatory process where we ask citizens for their views help but do not completely alleviate the problem.
- We believe that foresight can help us engage with citizens:
 - It can make engagement more meaningful by focussing on the future instead of highly technical details of regulatory practice.
 - It can also make it more impactful by ensuring that we understand what people care about and that we use their creativity in thinking about all possible future challenges and opportunities.

How does the Commission plan to embed strategic foresight into policy-making and the policy cycle? What is its added value, demonstrated via a concrete example?

- The Commission will be embedding foresight into EU policymaking by:
 - Conducting systematic foresight exercises on key policy initiatives and strategies planned in the Commission Work Programme, as well as on cross-cutting topics of relevance for Europe's future, including building reference foresight scenarios;
 - Making foresight a key element of the revised Better Regulation toolbox.
 - Supporting the development of strategic foresight capacities in the EU and its Member States; and
 - Building a collaborative and inclusive foresight community with other European and international actors, such as other institutions, Member States, think tanks, academia, stakeholders in industry and civil society.
- As a concrete example of this effort, this year's Strategic Foresight Report proposes moving towards resilience dashboards, which could help answer a fundamental question: are we succeeding, through our policies and recovery strategy, in making the EU more resilient?
- The resilience dashboards will be developed with the Member States and other key stakeholders, and the final list of indicators will be informed by strategic foresight, for instance as regards the choice of indicators to represent resilience. T
- his will be an important starting point to strengthen the Commission's monitoring toolbox when it comes to resilience as a new policy compass after the COVID-19 crisis.

What is the link between strategic foresight and resilience? How can foresight help strengthen resilience? And how do you measure resilience?

- Strategic foresight can help understand the impact of long-term trends on resilience and anticipate future scenarios to determine what the resilience requirements are. By mitigating vulnerabilities and strengthening resilience capacities identified by strategic foresight, resilience-enhancing policies can open new opportunities along each of the four dimensions presented in the report.
- Resilience should be monitored with proper tools. We have developed prototype resilience dashboards that show Member States' relative performance in a preliminary set of (publicly available) indicators of *vulnerabilities* and *resilience capacities*. These need to be further developed and tested in cooperation with key stakeholders and Member States.

What could be the link with the Conference on the Future of Europe?

- Foresight uses a number of inclusive and participatory techniques to gather the shared intelligence of diverse individuals. It can therefore both inform the Conference on the Future of Europe, and be informed by the input gathered from citizens.
- On the former, foresight can develop scenarios for the future, on the green and digital transitions, for example, and allow citizens to use these scenarios to have meaningful exchanges on the kind of future they want. This in turn can inform EU policymaking. But these are questions that are yet to be decided, as the launch of the Conference on the future of Europe will also depend on the evolution of the pandemic.

Contacts – briefing contribution:

