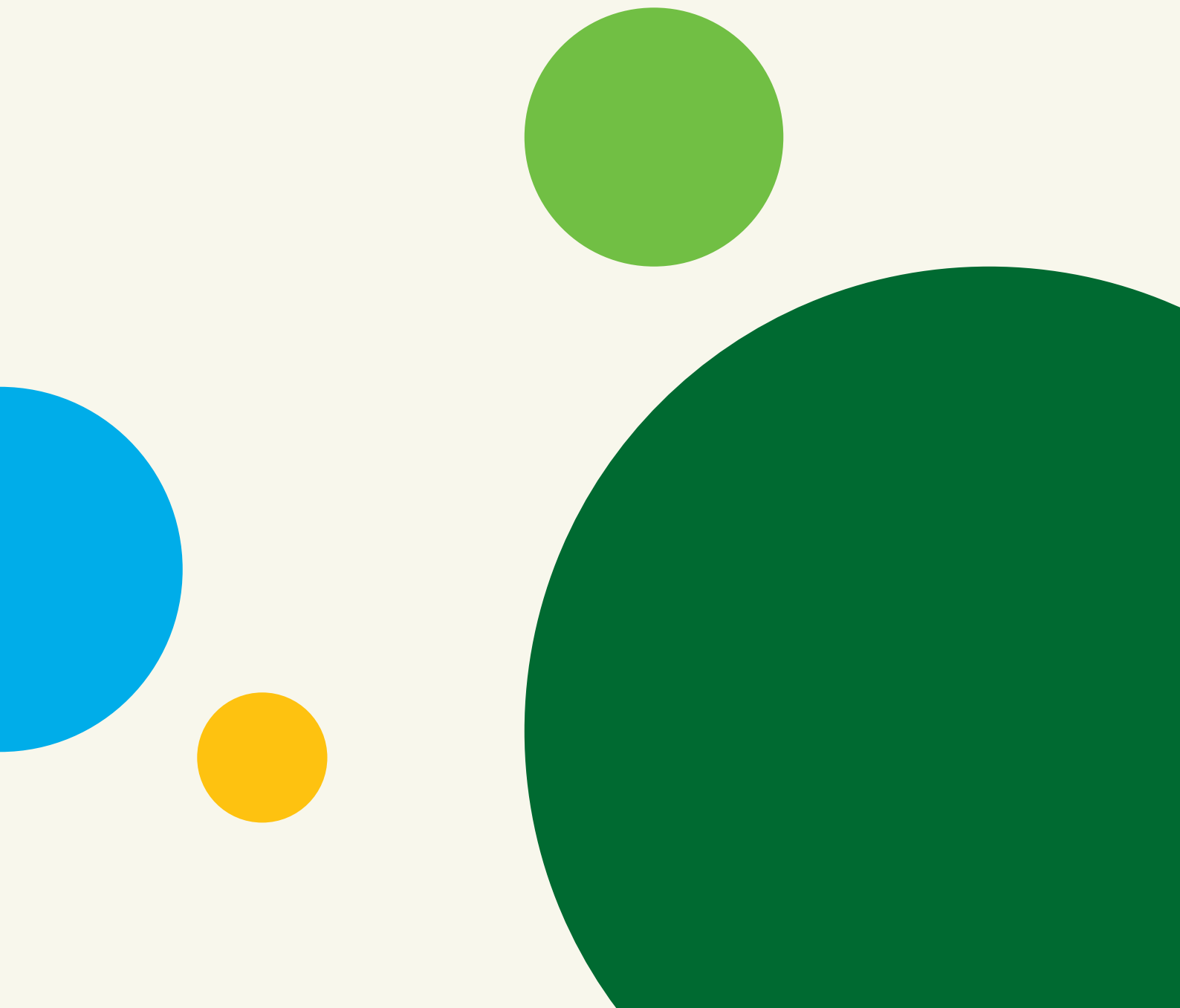


# Swedish Presidency workshop on Foresight in research and innovation:

Supporting transformative governance



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Report: R4:2023

ISBN: 978-91-540-6182-2

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Stockholm, Sweden, August 25, 2023

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## Participants and technical details

The workshop was held online, via Zoom on the 21st of June 2023. It was organised by the Swedish research council Formas together with the European Commission, as part of the Swedish EU presidency.

There were 72 registered participants from 14 different member states and two associated countries (Iceland and the UK), as well as from several EU bodies and organisations. Forty-five participants attended the online workshop. Participants came from different member states and associated countries, as well as from several EU bodies and organisations.

The profiles of participants were varied, from policy officers and foresight experts to wider representatives of ministries, funding agencies, local governments, research centres and institutes: all very relevant and crucial actors for building and broadening the European foresight in research and innovation (R&I) community.

## Background

A series of EU Presidency workshops on foresight in research and innovation was launched during the German Presidency, 25 November 2020, and continued through the Portuguese Presidency, 22 June 2021, the Slovenian Presidency, 10 December 2021, and the Czech Presidency, 7 October 2022.

The aim of these workshops, organised in cooperation with the European Commission, is primarily to strengthen Europe's R&I Foresight community with experts and policy makers, in order to strengthen the contributions of foresight to the R&I policies of the EU and its Member States. The workshops provide a European platform for the exchange of experiences and information on the implementation of foresight in research and innovation.

Each workshop has had a different focus, while building on the previous workshops. In the first workshop, organised by the German Presidency, Member States were invited to present their national state of the art of R&I related foresight activities and to discuss expectations and ideas for future cooperation with the Commission and other Member States. The Portuguese Presidency workshop took this further in identifying and analysing global uncertainties from the EU and the Member States perspective, as well as identifying potential common topics for foresight activities. Building on this, the Slovenian Presidency sought to progress to implementation through strengthening Europe's R&I foresight community as a strong force in wider European strategic foresight and as a complement to the European Union "Ministries' of the Future" network. The Czech Presidency workshop focused on inclusive foresight and public engagement, linked to a stronger involvement of citizens in structured discussions on the future direction of research, technological development, and innovation.

## The Swedish Presidency workshop: Foresight as a tool for transformative governance

The Swedish Presidency workshop focused on foresight as a tool for transformative governance, in the context of the urgent need for sustainability transitions and the transformative ambitions of EU research and innovation policy.

Foresight has long been recognized for its capacity to support organizations in making better decisions. It is often used to strengthen strategic and proactive thinking, but it can also be used to take different perspectives and needs into account, to bridge topics that are siloed, to boost resilience, to build communities, and to empower marginalised groups of people and perspectives.

To enable transformative change, governance needs to be integrative, inclusive, experimental, learning, and, not least, to take a long-term perspective. However, compared to the other aspects, the role of the long-term perspective in transformative governance remains under-articulated.

The main goals for the event were to:

- share experiences and discuss how foresight can be used as a tool for transformative governance in general and transformative research and innovation policy in particular, over different time horizons, and
- strengthen cooperation between research and innovation foresight communities (including and technology assessment communities) in Europe.

The workshop consisted of opening addresses, presentations of initiatives, and three interactive discussion sessions occurring in parallel. The aim of the parallel session was to afford interaction across workshop participants as well as to go both deeper and broader in the overarching theme of transformative governance. To this end, each of the parallel sessions were framed by a broad question and brief description:

*How can foresight support transformative governance and sustainability transitions at the local level?*

In this session we explored the different ways foresight can contribute to sustainable development at the local level, focusing on the governance of sustainability transitions. The aim was to articulate both promises and pitfalls of foresight as a governance tool, including issues such as participation and agency.

*How are research and innovation agencies using foresight in their strategic work?*

Several research and innovation agencies are using foresight as a tool in their strategic work, for example to identify new areas for research and innovation funding. In this session we focused on sharing examples of how such processes can be organised and what tangible and intangible outcomes can be gained.

*How could FP10 best support the European foresight community and the uptake of foresight in policy?*

The discussion focused on ways of using foresight in policy and on ways of organising research programmes to support the best use of foresight in policy. Building on the experience with foresight in the EU Framework Programme so far, the aim was to identify key elements for

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maximizing the contribution of FP10 to the foresight landscape across the EU and to the vision of forward-looking, anticipatory European policymaking.

## Opening addresses

*Johan KUYLENSTIERNA*, Director General, Formas, gave the opening address, emphasising that we are living in a time of transformation and acknowledging that there is a clear increase in foresight activities, across nations, organisations, and sectors. He continued by highlighting the global challenges facing the world and emphasising the role of research and innovation in mitigating multiple crises, and how foresight can contribute to this. Through engaging in or with foresight, research and innovation policy can strengthen its capability of addressing society's most pressing issues.

*Joanna DRAKE*, Deputy Director General, Directorate Research & Innovation, European Commission, welcomed the participants on behalf of the European Commission and discussed the contribution of foresight to the EU Research and Innovation (R&I) agenda. She highlighted the Strategic Plan Analysis (SPA) as a crucial instrument and emphasized the upcoming Framework Programme (FP10) for long-term initiatives. Additionally, she introduced the Future for Europe platform, which facilitates participation in and promotion of foresight-related activities and events.

## Sharing experiences

*Dr. Philine WARNKE*, Fraunhofer Institute for Systems and Innovation Research ISI, was the first presenter, providing an overview of transformative innovation and research for flourishing ecosystems. Dr. Warnke stressed the need to rewire the innovation system, which may involve the emergence of new actors, the disruption of existing linkages, and the creation of new ones. Given the dynamic nature of challenges, she emphasized the importance of reflexivity in the system. A central theme of the presentation was the narrative aspects and functions of foresight, and Dr. Warnke emphasised the potential of “telling new stories together”, not least for building trust and social cohesion. In this she saw an important role for different artistic practices. Dr. Warnke concluded her presentation by urging participants to reconsider the changes they seek, enhance transformative resilience, and foster continuous learning processes.

*Pia MCALEENAN*, Förnyelselabbet, gave the second presentation, focusing on how speculative and systemic design can be used for transformative governance and showcasing examples of Swedish projects. Pia McAleenan highlighted the importance of involving practitioners and/or everyday people in policy labs to shape policy and governance. She emphasised the significance of reflexive practices and encouraged the exploration of alternative futures through the use of thought models and prototypes. One of the key strengths of using speculative design as a foresight method is that it allows for translating abstract ideas into something that is concrete enough for people to be engaged by it, i.e. to provide a way for people to “step into the futures”. McAleenan also recommended the adoption of the Berkana Model of system change as a tool for transformative governance practices.

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## Discussion in parallel sessions

### **How can foresight support transformative governance and sustainability transitions at the local level?**

The session aimed to explore the promises and pitfalls associated with articulating foresight for transformative governance. Participants engaged in discussions on various aspects related to sustainable development, values and norms, procedural considerations, stakeholder participation, transition intermediaries, and the need for reflexive policies.

The first speaker addressed the rural transition processes and emphasized the role of foresight in collecting information, promoting collective reflection, and bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds who may not typically interact. Foresight was recognized as a key tool for facilitating sustainable development in rural areas.

The participants delved into the challenges of addressing topics such as climate justice where consensus is often hard to achieve. It was suggested that being explicit about values and norms can facilitate the decision-making process and the use of appropriate tools to navigate these complex issues.

Another participant highlighted the role of foresight in designing the future and overcoming the dichotomy between different demographics and urban actors. The question of developing structures to facilitate these discussions was raised, along with the need to engage academic actors, cities, NGOs, and associations that may be distanced from European innovation.

The issue of participation fatigue among stakeholders was discussed, emphasizing the importance of enabling easy and cost-effective participation. Creating an environment that facilitates smooth dialogue and reduces barriers to engagement was deemed crucial for sustained stakeholder involvement.

The meeting acknowledged the significance of transition intermediaries—individuals or organizers—who play a vital role in facilitating multi-stakeholder processes. Their ability to navigate diverse perspectives and foster collaboration among stakeholders was recognized as instrumental in achieving transformative governance outcomes.

The participants emphasized the need for policy to become more reflexive and adaptive to the shifting nature of complex challenges. Embracing the transformative turn and identifying the radical roots of the problems at hand were considered essential for effective governance in addressing societal and environmental transformations.

### **How are research and innovation agencies using foresight in their strategic work?**

This session aimed at sharing experiences of working with foresight. Participants were asked to not only share positive experiences but also shortcomings and problems.



Several of the participants came from R&I agencies and many of them used foresight, albeit in quite different manners – mirroring not only the different needs and mandates of these organisations but also differences in available resources and priorities.

The agencies used foresight for different strategic purposes, for example to identify future challenges or threats, to spark new research questions or programmes, or to communicate possible or desirable futures. A lot of different methods are used, some more traditional foresight methods such as horizon scanning, drivers mapping and visioning, other more recently developed (or recognised) such as storytelling and speculative design.

Several of the agencies present had experiences of collaborating with other agencies on foresight projects, as a way to bring in or strengthen their foresight competences. The degree and type of participation of people outside the agencies varied across agencies but also across foresight projects. Several agencies had experience of engaging experts such as researchers in their foresight processes, but none reported having engaged with citizens.

Digging a bit deeper into the question of foresight competence, participants discussed to what extent it is important to build this internally in an organisation or if one may just as well rely on external competence, for example through engaging external consultants. The participants recognised the benefits of building up foresight competence internally, not least to develop a common language for and understanding of foresight. It was emphasised that building internal foresight competence does not have to mean that everybody are to learn foresight methods, but that futures literacy is key.

On a final note, participants highlighted that it can be difficult to develop foresight processes that meet the needs and expectations of a (often) diverse group of end-users. Some end-users, who might be internal to the agency, are expecting to get new insights on emerging technologies in quantitative numbers, while others are more interested in qualitative changes in society, norms, values, family structures.

### **How could FP10 best support the European foresight community and the uptake of foresight in policy?**

The session aimed to discuss how foresight can contribute to the upcoming framework program 10 (FP10) as well as how FP10 can contribute to foresight.

One participant highlighted that foresight in EU research goes as far back as the 1970's, at which point it focused on the future of science. From 2010 and onwards the focus has instead been on using foresight in research rather than research contributing to foresight. Within the current Horizon Europe programme, foresight is used in several projects and there are a small number of projects in which foresight is the main activity. There is also a network for foresight within Horizon Europe: [www.futures4europe.eu](http://www.futures4europe.eu)

The participants talked about the changing role for foresight, from focusing on specific technologies to addressing larger questions. Foresight is increasingly recognised as a tool for supporting transformative innovation and governance. In relation to this it was acknowledged that questions of power and inclusiveness in relation to foresight are essential, for example in relation to futures literacy but also in relation to who is involved in making futures.

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In times of crises, it is easy to start looking more to the present time or the near future and to focus on solutions. While this is understandable it is important to remind both politicians and society that we need to continue looking ahead also in times of crises.

The meeting highlighted that foresight is not just a product but that the process per se is very important. Having key people or functions onboard early on in a foresight process is essential for this to have an impact.

On the topic of FP10, several points were made. One was the importance of coordination and interactions across projects, member states, and between member states and the European Commission. In relation to this, the importance of national capacities in foresight was brought up: “We can only be as successful in the European level as we are on the national level.” It was concluded that more work is needed in order to develop a coherent view on what is needed in FP10.

## Closing remarks and next steps

The Swedish Presidency workshop on foresight in research and innovation focused on the role of foresight in transformative governance. Through opening addresses, presentations, and discussions it became clear that foresight can be used in several different, and often complementing, ways to support transformative governance. From identifying and making sense of future challenges and opportunities, to setting research agendas and missions, from assessing the potential impacts of emerging technologies to engaging citizens and experts to “tell stories together”, foresight can contribute to making transformative governance more strategic, effective, and inclusive. Put differently, foresight can contribute to develop common visions based on the question of “transformation from what to what”, shed light on how such a process could look like from a governance point of view, and provide concrete representations of how everyday life in a post-transformation society could look like – and all this while including the needs, longings, and ideas of a variety of stakeholders.

In order to get there, there is however work to be done. There is a need to get a better coordination and increased interaction across projects, member states and the European Commission. There is also a need for strengthened foresight capacities at national levels. In relation to this it is however essential to recognise that different member states and agencies have different prerequisites, for example in terms of resources, inhouse foresight competence and priorities. One way to move forward is to continue the work on the Mutual Learning Exercise on R&I foresight that was launched by the European commission. Besides being a way to share experiences and ways of working across member states as well as between member states and the European commission, this would also contribute to further strengthening foresight communities at national and EU levels.

Finally, several speakers expressed the hope that the Spanish Presidency will continue the tradition of Presidency workshops in R&I foresight.

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## Appendix 1: Agenda

### *Welcome*

- Josefin Wangel, Main Moderator, Formas – a Swedish Research Council for Sustainable Development
- Johan Kuylenstierna, Director General, Formas
- Joanna Drake, Deputy Director General, Directorate Research & Innovation, European Commission

### *Sharing experiences*

Transformative research and innovation for flourishing ecosystems: Insights from foresight on human-nature relationships

- Dr. Philine Warnke, Coordinator of Business Unit Futures Dialogs Competence Center Foresight, Fraunhofer Institute for Systems and Innovation Research ISI, Karlsruhe

Speculative and systemic design for transformative governance: Swedish trials and learnings

- Pia McAleenan, Manager Public Sector Innovation and Collaboration and Lead for Förnyelselabbet

### *Discussion in parallel sessions*

- How can foresight support transformative governance and sustainability transitions at the local level?
- How are research and innovation agencies using foresight in their strategic work?
- How could FP10 best support the European foresight community and the uptake of foresight in policy?

### *Session moderators report back to plenary*

### *Closing remarks and next steps*

- Nikolaos Kastrinos, European Commission
- Josefin Wangel, Formas

Formas is a government research council for sustainable development. We fund research and innovation, develop strategies, perform analyses and conduct evaluations. Our areas of activity include the environment, agricultural sciences and spatial planning. We conduct evidence syntheses analyses that aim to make it easier for Sweden to achieve our environmental objectives. We also communicate research and research results.