

ETEPS Research Meeting

“Foresight as a Tool for Policy-making”

A Summary Report



Technology Centre ASCR

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Twenty-eight participants (listed in Annex 1) gathered for a two-day seminar exploring the prospects of utilization of foresight methods and tools in the policy-making. The seminar was organized by the Technology Centre ASCR at own premises and held under auspices of the European Techno-Economic Policy Support Network (ETEPS).

Welcome

The participants were welcomed by **Thomas Reiss** of ISI Fraunhofer, who introduced the ETEPS network and its mission as well as its new business models consisting of three pillars: Framework contracts, Specific contracts and Networking. The concept of Research Meetings forms part of the latter pillar. Their aim is to promote:

- Learning and exchange of tacit policy-oriented knowledge around topics relevant for research activities of ETEPS members
- Community building
- Generation of ideas for future joint research

Another activity within the Networking pillar is ETEPS Policy Seminar Series, directing rather outside the network and showcasing ETEPS network to policy-makers at the European level.

Ondrej Valenta of the Technology Centre then introduced the concept and aims of this Research Meeting by guiding the participants through the flow of the two-day event. The Research Meeting was to be a combination of plenary sessions with interactive working group sections. He invited the participants to try to speak their hearts and personality, rather than reproducing acquired knowledge from books and courses.



Framing the topic



The plenary session then continued by general presentations examining the role of foresight in the policy-making processes. **Michal Pazour** of the Technology Centre took on by presenting differences between the traditional and upcoming way of policy making and pinpointed the different impacts and outcomes that foresight can have. Finally, he presented the conceptual framework into which the Technology Centre embeds its activities in the area of policy analysis, evaluation and future-oriented studies.

Matthias Weber of the Austrian Institute of Technology followed by introducing participants the main features of foresight and historical perspective of utilization of foresight at the European level and development of its methodologies.

“Today’s renewed interest in foresight is driven predominantly by the effort to address so-called Grand Challenges requiring a long-term time horizon and coordinated action. This triggers demand for foresight in R&I as well as in sectoral policies (health, security, industry, regional, etc.). Strategic orientation is needed also in newly emerged instruments like Joint Programming Initiatives, Joint Technology Initiatives and so on, further boosted by development of social networks capable of new ways of mobilizing participation.”

Matthias also presented different types of embedment of foresight in policy-making and sketched some future challenges, which are still to be addressed.

Exploring benefits and pitfalls of foresight

The event continued by working group session. Participants were divided to two working groups, chaired by **Rafael Popper** of the University of Manchester (Group A), and **David Marek** of the Technology Centre (Group B).

At the beginning of the working group session in Group A, **Katharina Jarmai** of the Austrian Institute of Technology presented her findings on what are the crucial factors of creating a successful impact of a foresight exercise. In Group B, **Davy van Doren** of ISI Fraunhofer delivered challenges in foresight observed from two cases of foresight exercise in the area of synthetic biology.



Chairs of the working groups invited participants to series of conversations, attempted to be carried out in a world café manner. The aim of the conversations was to create some kind of a mind-map of the most significant benefits (green post-its) and pitfalls (pink post-its) of foresight – these were to be placed within a general triangle providing a framework of features of foresight. Picking up the most important features was done by voting.

In the late afternoon, the results of each group's work were presented at the plenary session. Kindly see Annex 2 of this report for full results.

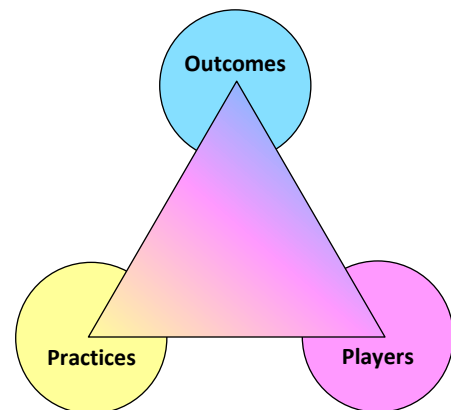
In summary, participants identified four complex themes, each representing a mix of challenges and opportunities for utilization of foresight in the policy-making:

Time and timing

Foresight is a time-consuming process and the time-schedule of foresight projects may not always fit into the time-pace of policy-making processes. Therefore, getting the right timing certainly is a challenge. Furthermore, foresight takes place in changing environment or systems, and it is hard to keep the recommendations up-to-date; on the other hand, “shelved” studies may also be utilized when necessary. Discussions were then held around the latter issue. Is a shelved foresight study really to be utilized in emergency situations, or rather a new study is commissioned? Sometimes foresight practitioners – in case foresight is institutionalized – face a “memory loss”, resulting from a circulation of staff in an institution. In some cases, new study or foresight exercise is commissioned even if a relevant recent study is available.

Selection of participants

Participatory approach of foresight is seen as one of its most important features. The issue is to select and invite the right participants to take part in the process; missing out important stakeholders is considered an epic fail. When the relevant participants are selected, there is a great potential to develop common understanding, dedication, consensus and networks that go beyond the foresight exercise. Moreover, by



the participative nature, foresight has the potential to enforce influence from bottom-up, to bring new ideas to the agenda, or to incorporate new or radical ideas.

Complexity

Another key element, connected with the participatory approach is that by bringing together individuals of various backgrounds, foresight is capable to deal with complexity. Foresight studies are often multidisciplinary, they go across sectors – the challenge is then to deliver the outcomes across the sector-divided system of administration.

Flexibility of methods

Foresight is capable to adapt methods to certain context, project; on the other hand, it causes fuzziness of its approaches, and subsequently fuzziness of foresight as such. The flexibility also applies to the scope of a study, which can be adjusted to client's needs.

Moving onto the Day 2

Day 2 of the Research Meeting began with presentations of international good practices in utilization of foresight at the national level. **Alun Rhydderch**, a Director of School of International Futures, United Kingdom, introduced foresight practices and their nature in the United Kingdom. The good practice in the United Kingdom is based on a systematic demand from the government for future-oriented studies, with a special focus on technology and innovation futures.



Ondrej Valenta, on behalf of Jan Marek, Head of the Department of Research, Development and Innovation at the Czech Office of Government, continued with presenting the context and ways of utilization of foresight methods within the process of identification of the current national thematic priorities for research, development and innovation. The level of utilization of foresight in public administration is very low in the Czech Republic, and this exercise is one of the few exceptions.

The third practice was that of Finland, presented by **Antti Kaski**, director for Policy Planning and Research at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. At the national level, future-oriented practices are carried out at each Ministry as well as by the whole-of-government. This might create rather fragmented foresight exercises, but they are in fact coordinated by an inter-ministerial body. What is particular in Finland is that each Ministry has its own foresight cycle, providing an input on what fields or themes need to be addressed by the next government. Antti also provided participants with part of the draft of such a document, prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Identification of common opportunities and challenges

The participants were then split into two working groups again. This parallel session was started off by delivering presentations on additional international good practices. In Group A, **Katharina Jarmai** of the Austrian Institute of Technology presented a case of a selected foresight (expert-based) exercise at the European level and emphasizes what factors caused this case successful in terms of impact and follow-up activities. Then **Rafael Popper** of the Manchester Institute of Innovation Research took on by presenting a United Kingdom's case on providing future-oriented recommendations to the health sector, drawing upon horizon scanning focused on megatrends, technologies and emerging issues.



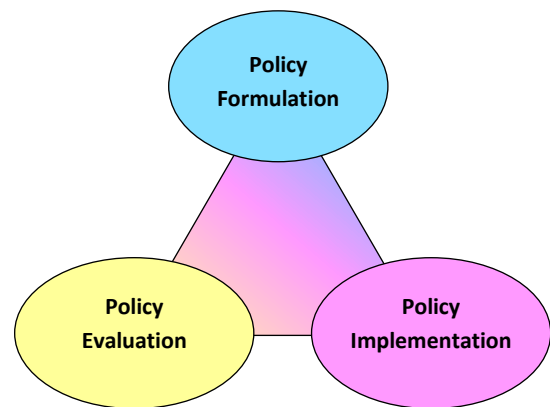
In Group B, **Maxime Petit Jean** delivered a presentation on the wake of new foresight practices in the Walloon Region of Belgium, focusing on energy transition. This project is still ongoing – it is characterized by a considerable mobilization of participants; however, it lacks proper political concern.



Participants then dived into an interactive discussion, aimed at identification of common opportunities (orange post-its) and challenges (yellow post-its) of utilization of foresight at various national contexts. Are there actually some common features, which can contribute to a greater impact of foresight? Is there something that can be put forward within all these distinct national contexts? Participants were drawing upon the results of Day 1 as well as the case studies on Day 2 and discussed their ideas

and suggestions within a broader framework of policy-making cycle, consisting of three basic phases (see a policy cycle triangle on your right).

At noon, the results of each group's work were presented at the plenary session. See Annex 3 for the original results.



The results can again be summarized into several thematic clusters. Each cluster represents a bulk of success factors combined with threats.

Public ownership

Yielding as much from a participatory approach of foresight, one of the success factors of a foresight exercise seems to be bringing together not only relevant stakeholders to the process, but also representatives of a wide spectrum of civil society, including the ones outside the comfort zone with contradictory opinions. The involvement of such a wide spectrum of participants puts increased burden to proper management of the whole foresight exercise; nevertheless, it substantially increase the legitimacy of the process outputs and creates a higher embedment and a sense of ownership of the resulting policy in the society. People would no longer be only a target group of such a policy, but also its creators and disseminators as there would be a clear opportunity to put forward ideas or emerging topics that are already part of public discussions but not yet on policy agenda.

Engagement of stakeholders

Besides involvement of wide public, it is necessary to create a sense of ownership also among the policy-makers – the ones who would implement the outcomes of the foresight exercise. This is certainly one of the most significant challenges of every foresight; yet, involvement of a sufficient as well as diverse spectrum of stakeholders and policy-makers contributes to creation of a common vision and perhaps also easier prioritization and setting up responsibilities of the resulting tasks during the implementation phase.

Timing of foresight

The closely policy-related topic is also timing. The “art” of a successfully utilized foresight exercise is considered to be the ability to come up with the right topic at the right time, when the foresight process or its outputs fit to the policy agenda, which is currently on the table. The main benefit of foresight is that next to other evidence-based support to policy-making, it brings a long-term perspective to the attention of policy-makers by its focus on long-term prospects and emerging challenges and risks.

Un-biased evaluation

Foresight involves continual learning. During the policy cycle, several feedback loops can lead to re-scoping, whereas final evaluation of policy impacts and effects represents the most important one. Especially in countries with weak evaluation culture, policy formulation should pay a particular attention to incorporate multiple evaluation steps, based on suitable set of indicators. Only a balanced set of respected evaluators can produce un-biased evaluation, providing a quality input for foresight exercise.

At the end, **Michal Pazour** resumed the two days and thanked participants for taking active roles. I also hope that attending the event contributed at least somehow to your current knowledge and experience as to foresight and that your participation encouraged you to your further work as policy analysts, foresight practitioners or researchers at your home organizations.

Ondrej

P.S: At [this link](#), you can find this report on-line, as well as selected presentations from the Research Meeting.

Annex 1:

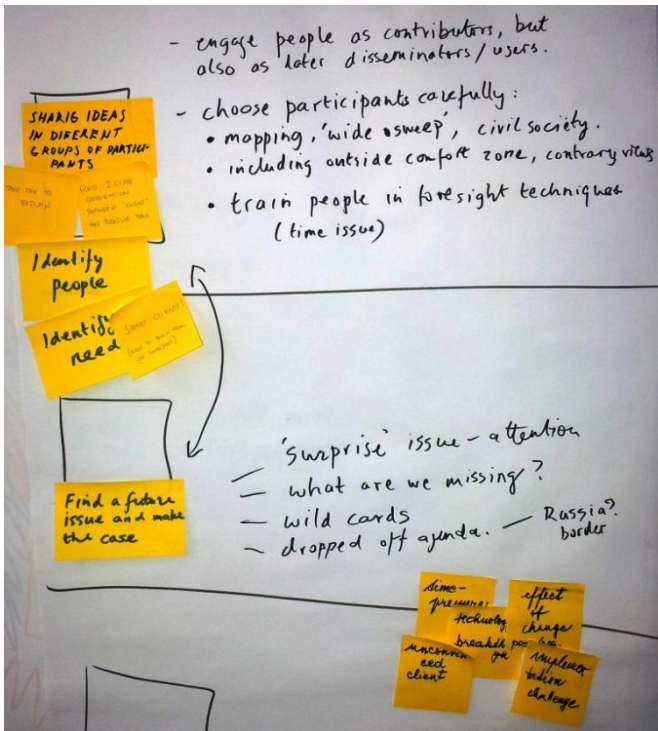
List of participants

Name	Surname	Organization	Country
Radka	Cahlikova	Palacký University Olomouc, Department of Development Studies	Czechia
Martin	Fařun	Technology Centre ASCR	Czechia
Hanna-Stella	Haaristo	Praxis Center for Policy Studies	Estonia
Pavla	Hájková	Palacký University, Department of Development Studies	Czechia
Adriana	Horníková	University of Economics in Bratislava, Department of statistics	Slovakia
Katharina	Jarmai	AIT – Austrian Institute of Technology	Austria
Antti	Kaski	Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland	Finland
Eva	Komlossyová	Palacký University Olomouc, Department of Development Studies	Czechia
David	Marek	Technology Centre ASCR	Czechia
Lenka	Mařincová	Palacký University Olomouc, Department of Development Studies	Czechia
Tomáš	Michalek	Technology Centre ASCR	Czechia
Michal	Minčev	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Czechia
Fausto	Mirabile	VDI Technologiezentrum GmbH	Germany
Petr	Pavlík	Palacký University Olomouc, Department of Development Studies	Czechia
Michal	Pazour	Technology Centre ASCR	Czechia
Maxime	Petit Jean	Université Catholique de Louvain	Belgium
Marie	Hyklová	Ministry of Industry and Trade	Czechia
Ondřej	Pokorný	Technology Centre ASCR	Czechia
Rafael	Popper	Manchester Institute of Innovation Research	United Kingdom
Tomáš	Ratinger	Technology Centre ASCR	Czechia
Thomas	Reiss	Fraunhofer Institute for Systems and Innovation Research	Germany
Alun	Rhydderch	School of International Futures	United Kingdom
Thomas	Trost Hansen	Danish Agency for Science, Technology and Innovation	Denmark
Ondřej	Valenta	Technology Centre ASCR	Czechia
Davy	van Doren	Fraunhofer ISI	Germany
Tomáš	Vondrák	Technology Centre ASCR	Czechia
Věra	Vorlíčková	Technology Centre ASCR	Czechia
Matthias	Weber	AIT – Austrian Institute of Technology	Austria

Annex 3:

Day 2: Working Groups' Results

Group A



Group B

