

BOOKLET ON **MUTUAL LEARNINGS**

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Executive summary

The Eye of Europe project has established Mutual Learning Events (MLEs) as a key instrument for strengthening foresight capacity, practice and institutional embedding in research and innovation (R&I) policymaking across Europe. Between 2024 and 2025, five MLEs brought together policymakers, representatives of national administrations and funding agencies, foresight practitioners, and experts from Member States and Associated Countries. Together, these events created a structured space for exchanging experiences, reflecting on good practices, and jointly addressing challenges related to the use of foresight in R&I policy.

This booklet synthesises the main conclusions and mutual learnings emerging from the five MLEs. Rather than reproducing the individual event reports, it offers a cross-cutting reflection on how foresight is evolving in European R&I policymaking, what enables its effective use, and how MLEs contribute to the longer-term institutionalisation of foresight at national and European levels.

Across the five events, a clear convergence emerged around the changing role of foresight in R&I policy. Foresight is no longer understood primarily as a technical exercise aimed at producing analytical outputs or future-oriented reports. Instead, it is increasingly recognised as a **process-oriented, participatory and reflexive practice** that supports collective sense-making, strategic learning and deliberation under conditions of uncertainty. Participants repeatedly emphasised that the greatest value of foresight lies not only in its results, but in the way

it brings together diverse perspectives, challenges implicit assumptions, and enables policymakers to reflect on alternative futures before committing to strategic choices.

A second core learning concerns the **integration of foresight into the R&I policy cycle**. The MLEs highlighted that foresight can inform multiple stages of policymaking, including agenda-setting, strategic planning, priority-setting, policy design and review. However, successful integration depends on timing, institutional context and governance arrangements. Foresight inputs are most effective when they are aligned with concrete policy processes and decision points, rather than being conducted as stand-alone exercises. At the same time, participants noted the need to preserve flexibility and openness, avoiding overly rigid or formalised approaches that could limit the exploratory and anticipatory character of foresight.

The MLEs also underscored the critical importance of **communication** for translating foresight into policy-relevant insights. Effective foresight communication goes beyond dissemination of findings and requires careful adaptation to different audiences, policy contexts and decision-making cultures. A wide range of formats like narratives, visualisations, interactive workshops, and non-traditional media were identified as essential complements to written reports. Communication was consistently framed as an integral part of institutional embedding, enabling foresight to become part of ongoing policy conversations rather than a one-off input.

Long-term visioning and priority-setting emerged as another key theme. Participants stressed that foresight provides a structured way to reconcile long-term ambitions with short-term political and budgetary constraints. By articulating shared visions and exploring alternative pathways, foresight can help align R&I investments with broader societal challenges and strategic objectives. At the same time, the MLE discussions highlighted persistent tensions between inclusiveness and efficiency, expert-driven analysis and participatory processes, and national priorities and European-level coordination.

A distinct contribution of the later MLEs was the focus on **foresight culture and futures literacy**. Building sustainable foresight capacity requires more than tools and methods; it depends on organisational routines, skills, leadership support and a shared understanding of the value of anticipatory thinking. The MLEs demonstrated that developing a foresight culture is a gradual process, supported by communities of practice, peer learning and continuous exchange across countries and institutions. In this respect, the MLEs themselves functioned as an important capacity-building mechanism, strengthening professional networks and fostering a common language around foresight in R&I policy.

The MLE series confirms that mutual learning is a powerful instrument for advancing foresight practice and its institutionalisation in Europe. By providing a trusted space for open discussion, comparison of experiences and joint reflection, the MLEs helped participants move beyond abstract debates towards practical insights into “what works, under which conditions, and why”. The series also revealed that while national contexts differ significantly, many of the underlying challenges, such as short-termism, limited absorption capacity, and the need for political ownership, are widely shared.

The booklet also highlights the complementary role of the Futures4Europe platform as a digital infrastructure for sustaining exchange between events. Participants generally viewed the platform positively as a tool for knowledge sharing, networking and community continuity, although future impact will depend on ease of use, visibility and practical relevance to daily policy work.

Looking ahead, the findings suggest that sustained investment in mutual learning, communities of practice and capacity development will be essential for strengthening the role of foresight in European R&I policymaking. The experience of the Eye of Europe MLEs points to the value of embedding such exchanges more permanently within the European Research Area, supporting not only better-informed policies, but also more adaptive, reflexive and future-oriented governance. The Eye of Europe MLE series has shown that Europe already possesses the foundations of a stronger anticipatory governance system. The next challenge is to scale these foundations into a more permanent European capability for future-oriented collective intelligence.

Introduction

Europe's research and innovation (R&I) systems are operating in an environment shaped by accelerating technological change, geopolitical uncertainty, climate transition, demographic pressures and growing societal expectations. In such conditions, policymaking can no longer rely solely on retrospective evidence or incremental adjustment. Public authorities increasingly need capacities that help them anticipate emerging developments, explore alternative futures and prepare more adaptive strategic responses. This is the context in which foresight has gained renewed importance across the European Research Area (ERA) as a source of strategic intelligence and as a governance practice that supports long-term orientation, resilience and policy coherence.

The Eye of Europe project was launched against this backdrop with the ambition of strengthening the European foresight community and reinforcing the role of foresight in R&I policymaking. Rather than treating foresight as a niche expert activity, the project approaches it as a collective capability that depends on culture, institutions, professional networks and policy demand. A central instrument for advancing this ambition was the organisation of five Mutual Learning Events (MLEs) between 2024 and 2025. These events brought together policymakers, national administrations, funding agencies, foresight practitioners, researchers and experts from Member States and Associated Countries to exchange experiences and reflect on the practical use of foresight in governance.

Why Mutual Learning Events?

The rationale for the MLEs was straightforward: many European countries face similar challenges in using foresight effectively, yet they often address them in relative isolation. While institutional contexts differ, common issues recur across systems: short-term policy pressures, fragmented responsibilities, limited absorption capacity, weak links between foresight exercises and decision-making, and insufficient continuity of expertise. Mutual learning offers a practical response to these challenges by enabling policymakers and practitioners to compare approaches, identify transferable lessons and understand what works under different conditions.

The MLE format was therefore designed not as a conventional conference series, but as a structured peer-learning mechanism. Each event focused on a specific strategic theme relevant to the institutionalisation of foresight: emerging practices, communication of foresight results, integration into the policy cycle, long-term visioning and priority-setting, and foresight culture. Together, these topics formed a cumulative learning pathway moving from practical methods towards broader questions of governance capability and institutional embedding.

The MLEs fulfilled several complementary functions within the Eye of Europe project. First, they served as a capacity-building instrument, helping policymakers, agencies and practitioners strengthen their understanding of foresight methods, improve futures literacy, and build confidence in using long-term and uncertainty-oriented perspectives in R&I poli-

cymaking. Second, they acted as a mechanism for community formation, creating a trusted European space in which actors from ministries, agencies, universities and expert organisations could exchange experiences, build professional networks and develop common reference points for foresight practice. Third, the MLEs supported institutional learning, enabling organisations and policy systems to reflect on how foresight can be better integrated into governance routines, communication processes, strategic planning and priority-setting. In this way, the MLEs functioned not only as thematic events, but as practical tools for strengthening anticipatory capacity and the gradual institutionalisation of foresight across Europe.

Positioning the MLEs within ERA, ERAC and PSF traditions

The MLE series should be understood as part of a broader European tradition of mutual learning, policy coordination and strategic intelligence development within the ERA. For many years, the ERA has promoted peer exchange, comparative learning and voluntary coordination as mechanisms for strengthening national R&I systems while respecting institutional diversity. A good example is the FORLEARN project launched in 2005 by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) to build and share foresight expertise across Europe.¹ In this context, the Eye of Europe MLEs represent a foresight-focused contribution to ERA objectives by helping Member States and Associated Countries build anticipatory capacity, improve strategic planning and share practical experience in future-oriented governance.

More specifically, the MLEs build on earlier European discussions on the role of foresight in R&I policy that took place under successive Council Presidencies. Workshops organised during the German Presidency (2020), Portuguese Presidency (2021), Slovenian Presidency (2021), Czech Presidency (2022), and Swedish Presidency (2023) highlight-

ed the growing need to strengthen the European foresight community and to create more structured opportunities for exchange among policymakers and practitioners. These discussions reflected a recognition that foresight had become increasingly relevant for addressing complex transitions, systemic uncertainty and the long-term direction of European innovation policy.

The Eye of Europe MLEs also connect directly to the tradition of the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC). The idea of a dedicated Policy Support Facility (PSF) Mutual Learning Exercise on R&I Foresight was proposed by the Slovenian Presidency during an ERAC meeting in December 2021. The stated objective was to facilitate the exchange of information, experiences and lessons learned in the practice of R&I foresight across the EU and Associated Countries, while contributing to the development of an impactful European foresight community. This positioned foresight not merely as an analytical technique, but as a strategic policy capability deserving coordinated European attention.

The subsequent PSF Mutual Learning Exercise on R&I Foresight further reinforced this agenda. It brought together nine countries, and addressed topics highly relevant to institutionalisation of foresight, citizen engagement methods, foresight for the twin transition and disruptions, and links between smart specialisation, EU Missions and partnerships. The Eye of Europe MLE series can therefore be seen as building on and extending this PSF experience, moving from a one-off policy support exercise toward a broader and more continuous community-building effort. While earlier ERA and PSF initiatives established important foundations, the five MLEs demonstrated how regular, thematic and community-oriented learning formats can help embed foresight more deeply into policymaking systems. They therefore represent both a continuation of existing European cooperation traditions and a forward-looking model for strengthening anticipatory governance in the next phase of the ERA.

1. See Da Costa, O., Warnke, P., Cagnin, C., & Scapolo, F. (2008). The impact of foresight on policy-making: insights from the FORLEARN mutual learning process. *Technology Analysis & Strategic Management*, 20(3), 369–387. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09537320802000146>.

Purpose of this booklet

This booklet has two objectives. First, it synthesises the main lessons emerging from the five MLEs, identifying recurring themes, transferable practices and common challenges across different national contexts. Second, it reflects on the wider impact of the MLE series as an instrument for strengthening foresight practice and institutionalisation in Europe. The booklet therefore does not reproduce individual event reports. Instead, it offers a cross-cutting analytical perspective on how foresight is evolving in European R&I policymaking, what conditions enable its effective use, and how mutual learning can support more future-oriented governance.

The analysis presented in this booklet draws on several complementary evidence sources. The primary basis was the set of summary reports produced after each of the five Mutual Learning Events, which documented key discussions, presentations and participant reflections. These materials were reviewed comparatively to identify recurring patterns, converging lessons and distinctive examples of good practice.

A second evidence source was the participant survey conducted after the MLE series, which explored perceived impacts at individual, organisational and systemic levels, as well as early signs of sustained change. The survey results provide insight into how participants experienced the MLEs as a learning instrument and where they saw added value for foresight institutionalisation.

The synthesis benefited from the perspective of organisers and rapporteurs involved throughout the process, allowing interpretation of the broader trajectory of the MLE series. The result is not a formal evaluation in a causal sense, but an evidence-informed reflection on what the MLE experience suggests for the future of foresight in Europe.

This booklet invites readers to see the MLEs not simply as a completed project activity, but as an example of how Europe can build more connected, reflective and future-oriented R&I governance in the years ahead.

How to use this booklet

This booklet is designed as a practical resource for different actors involved in R&I policymaking and strategic intelligence, each of whom can use it in a slightly different way depending on their role and needs.

For policymakers (ministries, strategic bodies):

The booklet provides a concise overview of why foresight matters for decision-making and how it can be integrated into policy processes. Policymakers are encouraged to focus on the key insights and forward-looking recommendations, using the examples and models as inspiration for adapting foresight to their own institutional context.

For research and innovation agencies and public organisations:

The booklet offers guidance on how to operationalise foresight in practice, including organisational arrangements, process design and stakeholder engagement. Agencies may use the booklet as a reference for developing services, improving internal processes and strengthening links to policy clients.

For foresight practitioners and experts:

The booklet provides a synthesis of emerging practices, methodological insights and lessons on institutional embedding. It highlights how foresight can be made more relevant and actionable through better communication, co-creation and alignment with policy cycles. Practitioners can use the booklet to reflect on their own approaches, benchmark against European practices, and identify ways to increase policy impact.

Across all audiences, the booklet is intended as a source of structured learning and inspiration. Readers are encouraged to focus on the principles, examples and recommendations most relevant to their context, and to adapt them to their own governance structures, policy priorities and levels of foresight maturity.

The MLE series at a glance

This chapter provides a structured overview of the five Mutual Learning Events, their themes, formats, and policy focus areas. The chapter helps readers navigate the series and understand how the MLEs collectively evolved from sharing practices toward deeper reflection on foresight institutionalisation.

Overview of the five MLEs

The five MLEs organised under the Eye of Europe project formed a coherent learning pathway designed to strengthen the integration of foresight into European R&I policymaking. Rather than a collection of stand-alone meetings, the series evolved progressively from mapping emerging practices and sharing experiences, through improving communication and policy uptake, towards deeper reflection on institutional embedding, long-term strategic steering and the cultivation of foresight culture.

The MLEs created a structured forum for policymakers, foresight practitioners, funding agencies and public authorities to exchange good practices, compare governance models and collectively reflect on how anticipatory capacities can be strengthened across the European Research Area. The sequence of themes mirrors a broader maturation of foresight in Europe: from methods and tools towards governance capability, institutional routines and communities of practice.

MLE	THEME	DATE	HOST CITY	MAIN POLICY QUESTION
MLE 1	Foresight for R&I policy: emerging practices	23 May 2024	Bratislava, Slovakia	What roles, functions and institutional models are emerging for foresight in R&I policymaking?
MLE 2	Policy-oriented communication of foresight results	26 September 2024	Online	How can foresight insights be communicated so that they influence policy decisions?
MLE 3	Integration of foresight into the R&I policy cycle	21 January 2025	Online	How can foresight be embedded into agenda-setting, planning, implementation and policy review?
MLE 4	Foresight for long-term visioning and priority setting	7-8 April 2025	Budapest, Hungary	How can foresight help define long-term visions and strategic priorities under uncertainty?
MLE 5	Foresight culture in Europe	23-24 October 2025	Chisinau, Moldova	What capacities, norms and ecosystems are needed to mainstream foresight in Europe?

Evolution of focus across the MLE series

The thematic evolution of the MLE series demonstrates a deliberate broadening of focus from mapping emerging foresight practices and institutional models towards deeper reflection on foresight institutionalisation, policy integration and foresight culture.

The first MLE focused on emerging practices, mapping how foresight is organised across countries and identifying benefits, methods and early governance models. It addressed foundational questions: what foresight is, why it matters, and how it is being used in R&I systems. This provided a baseline understanding of the European foresight landscape.

The second MLE shifted attention to communication, recognising that foresight only creates public value when insights are translated into forms usable by decision-makers. Discussions highlighted storytelling, visuals, policy briefs, exhibitions and participatory formats as mechanisms for increasing policy uptake. The third MLE moved into policy integration, focusing on how foresight can become a recurring component of the R&I policy cycle rather than an external advisory exercise. Agenda-setting, strategic planning, adaptive governance and reflexive policymaking were central themes.

The fourth MLE addressed long-term visioning and priority-setting, linking foresight to directionality in innovation policy. It explored how countries and institutions can define long-range goals while remaining responsive to geopolitical, technological and societal change.

The fifth MLE broadened the lens further to foresight culture. Here the focus moved beyond individual exercises to the wider ecosystems, skills, institutional norms and communities of practice required to normalise anticipatory thinking across Europe. Futures literacy, collaborative networks and cross-sector engagement were particularly emphasised.

This progression reflects an important policy lesson: successful foresight institutionalisation does not begin and end with methods. It requires communication capacity, policy integration mechanisms, strategic relevance and an enabling organisational culture.

Logic model of the MLE series

The logic model presents the MLE series as a cumulative pathway through which thematic peer-learning activities contribute to stronger foresight capacities and more anticipatory R&I policymaking in Europe.

The process begins with the **inputs and design features** of the MLE series. The series consisted of five thematically focused MLEs, with topics selected on the basis of suggestions provided by consortium members in line with their needs, priorities and preferences. The events involved a diverse mix of policy-makers, practitioners, public agencies and experts. The inclusion of national, European and international case studies, together with interactive peer-learning sessions, created a strong foundation for exchange and comparative learning.

These design elements enabled a range of **learning processes** among participants. Across the series, participants exchanged practices and governance models, reflected on barriers and enabling conditions, compared national experiences, and jointly explored the evolving role of foresight in policymaking. Equally important, the MLEs supported relationship-building, trust creation and the emergence of professional networks across countries and institutions.

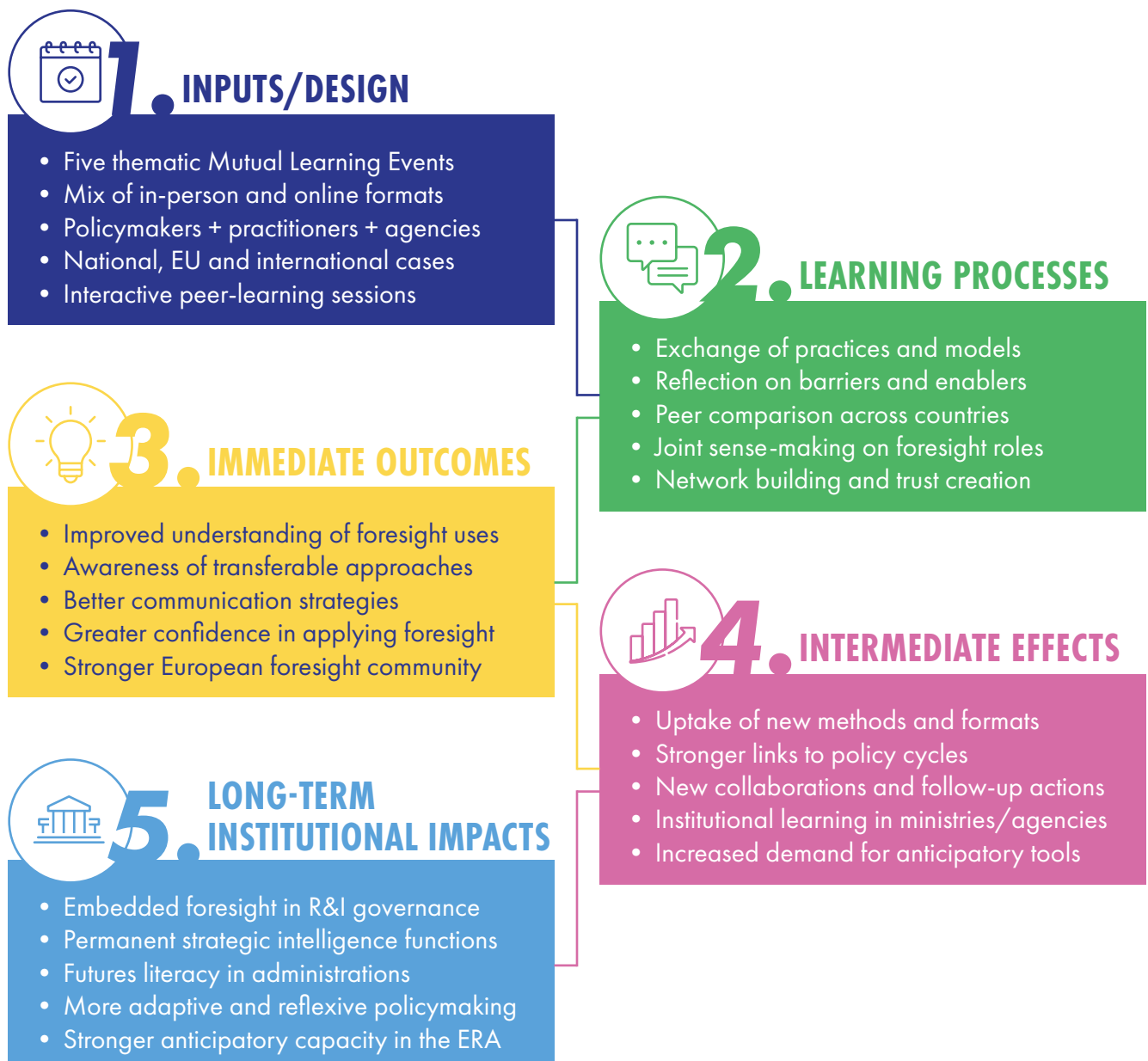
These interactions generated several **immediate outcomes**. Participants reported an improved understanding of how foresight can be used in R&I policy, greater awareness of transferable approaches, and stronger communication strategies for translating foresight into policy-relevant messages. The series also helped build confidence in applying foresight methods and contributed to a stronger European foresight community.

Over time, these short-term benefits can translate into broader **intermediate effects** within organisations and policy systems. These include the uptake of new methods and participatory formats, stronger links between foresight and policy cycles, new collaborations and follow-up activities, and organisational learning within ministries and agencies. The MLEs also helped stimulate increased demand for anticipatory tools and strategic intelligence in policymaking.

At the highest level, the model points to **long-term institutional impacts**. These include embedding foresight within R&I governance structures, establishing permanent strategic intelligence functions, strengthening futures literacy in public administrations, and enabling more adaptive and reflexive policymaking. Collectively, these changes contribute to stronger anticipatory capacity across the European Research Area.

Logic model of the MLE series

A cumulative learning journey that strengthens foresight capabilities and builds anticipatory, resilient and future-ready R&I policy systems in Europe.



Core mutual learnings across MLEs

This chapter is the analytical heart of the booklet that synthesises the key cross-cutting insights emerging from all five events, focusing on how foresight is used, communicated, and embedded in R&I policymaking. Rather than reporting individual events, it identifies shared patterns, converging lessons, and recurring challenges across national contexts.

The changing role of foresight in R&I policymaking

The mutual learning discussions reveal a clear convergence around a redefinition of foresight within R&I policymaking in Europe. Foresight is increasingly understood not as a technical analytical support tool, but as a key component of anticipatory governance, in line with emerging ERA-level thinking. This reflects a broader shift from evidence-informed policymaking towards reflexive and adaptive governance, capable of responding to structural uncertainty, long-term transformations and systemic risks.

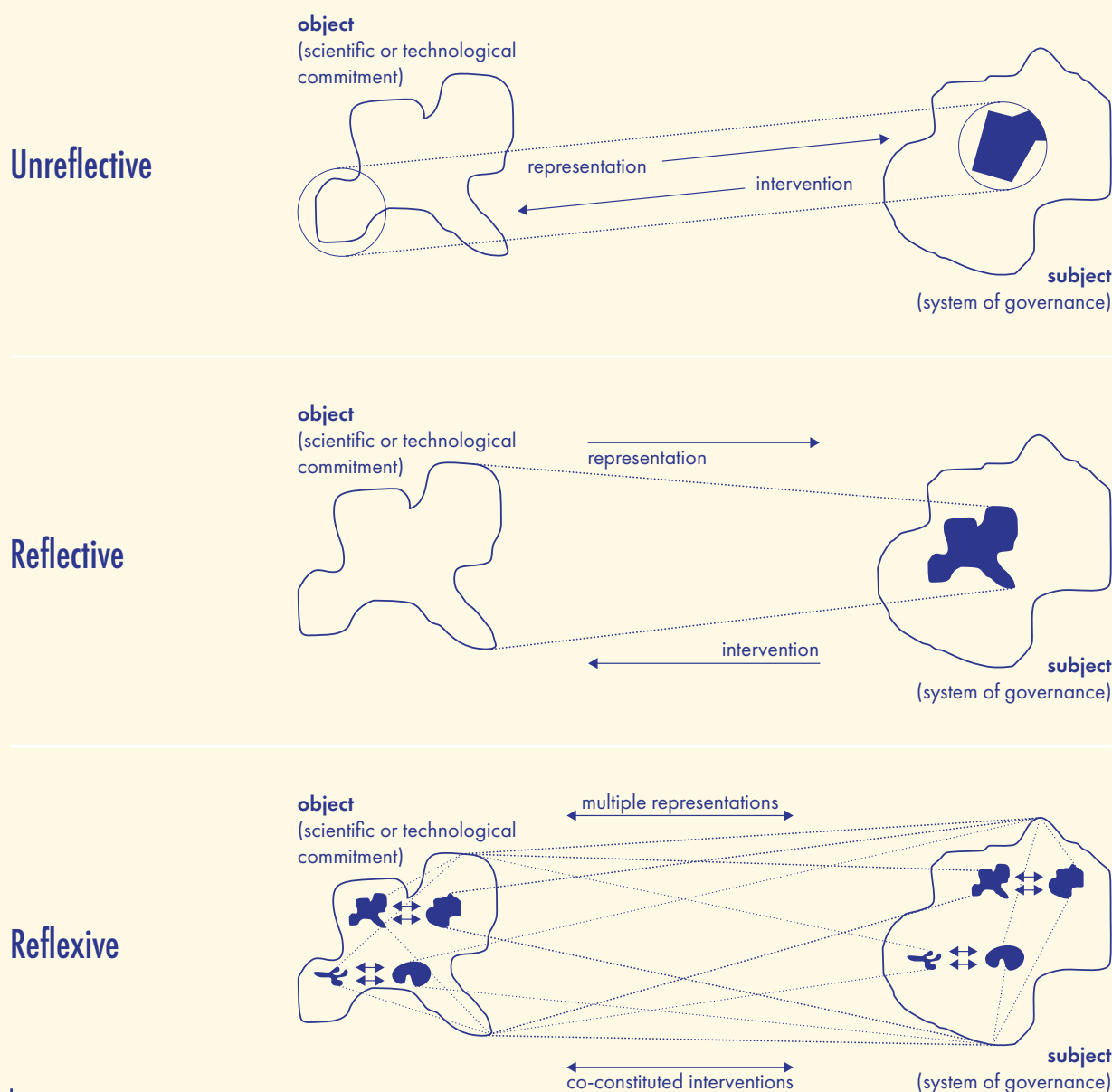
Within this perspective, foresight functions first as a **sense-making process**. It enables policymakers to interpret complex interactions between technological, economic, social and geopolitical drivers, and to frame policy questions in ways that acknowledge uncertainty rather than seeking premature closure. By structuring reflection on alternative futures, foresight contributes to strategic intelligence that supports coherence across policy domains and time horizons, which is an increasingly important objective within the European Research Area.

Foresight also acts as a **deliberative space** that aligns closely with principles of participatory and mission-oriented governance promoted at European level. Through structured dialogue among policymakers, experts and stakeholders, foresight creates opportunities to surface assumptions, explore contested futures and negotiate shared orientations. Such deliberation is particularly relevant for transformative R&I agendas, where policy choices involve value judgements, trade-offs and long-term societal implications.

Finally, foresight plays a growing role as a **legitimacy-building mechanism**. In anticipatory governance, legitimacy derives not only from outcomes, but from inclusive and transparent processes that demonstrate responsiveness to societal concerns. Similar to the FORLEARN project, the current discussions underscored that foresight processes which are open, participatory and iterative help strengthen trust in strategic R&I decisions, especially where policies aim to steer long-term transitions or address grand challenges.

From reflective to reflexive policymaking

Discussions during MLE3 highlighted how foresight can support reflexive policymaking by creating institutionalised spaces to question the underlying assumptions of R&I strategies, rather than merely optimising predefined policy objectives. Drawing on distinctions introduced by Andy Stirling, the event explored the shift from a reflective policymaker, who seeks to refine existing goals, to a reflexive policymaker, who uses foresight to engage in a deeper “deliberation with responsibility”.



From Nikos Kastrinos's presentation, adapted from Stirling, Andy. (2006).
Precaution, Foresight and Sustainability: reflection and reflexivity in the governance of technology.
 10.4337/9781847200266.00020.

Foresight as process, not just output

A core insight across the mutual learnings concerns the recognition of foresight as a process-based governance practice, rather than a producer of stand-alone outputs. This understanding is closely aligned with ERA discussions on learning-oriented and adaptive policymaking. While scenarios, reports and visualisations remain relevant, their primary value lies in enabling learning, reflection and capacity building among policy actors.

The **participatory value** of foresight was repeatedly emphasised. Participation is not only a normative aspiration linked to inclusiveness, but a functional requirement for addressing complex and systemic challenges. Engaging diverse actors throughout the foresight process improves the robustness of insights and strengthens their policy relevance, particularly in multi-level governance contexts characteristic of the ERA. At the same time, participatory foresight strengthens the legitimacy, ownership and practical impact of resulting decisions and actions by fostering broader alignment and shared understanding among stakeholders. In this sense, foresight contributes not only to informing policy choices, but also to facilitating coordination, coalition-building and collective commitment around long-term strategic directions.

Closely related are the **learning effects for policy-makers**. Recurrent engagement in foresight processes contributes to the development of futures literacy, enhances the ability to work with uncertainty, and supports a shift from reactive to anticipatory modes of thinking. These learning effects accumulate over time and are increasingly recognised as a form of institutional capacity, rather than an individual skill.

From a design perspective, these insights imply that foresight exercises should be conceived as **iterative, adaptive and embedded processes**. One-off studies with limited interaction were widely seen as insufficient. Instead, foresight should be connected to ongoing policy cycles, supported by appropriate facilitation, and embedded in organisational routines that allow insights to be revisited and updated.

Communication as a policy lever

Communication emerged as a strategic lever for embedding foresight into R&I governance, rather than a downstream dissemination activity. This aligns with anticipatory governance approaches that emphasise interaction, interpretation and sense-making over linear knowledge transfer.

A central insight concerned the need to **align foresight communication with policy windows and decision-making rhythms**. Policymakers operate under time pressure and institutional constraints, and foresight insights must be communicated in formats that are concise, timely and directly connected to policy questions. Communication thus becomes a mechanism for increasing the usability of strategic intelligence.

The mutual learnings also stressed the importance of formats beyond traditional reports. **Visualisations, narratives, artefacts and interactive tools** were identified as particularly effective in making futures tangible and accessible. Such formats support cognitive engagement and help bridge the gap between long-term perspectives and short-term policy concerns.

Crucially, communication was framed as an **integral component of institutional embedding**. Communication accompanies the entire foresight process by supporting a continuous dialogue between foresight producers and users. This contributes to internal legitimacy, reinforces learning effects and increases the likelihood that foresight becomes a recurring input to policy deliberation.

Embedding foresight in the R&I policy cycle

The synthesis of discussions points to a differentiated understanding of how foresight can be embedded across the R&I policy cycle, in line with ERA ambitions for more coherent and anticipatory governance frameworks. Foresight was seen as adding value at multiple entry points, rather than being confined to a single phase.

At the **agenda-setting stage**, foresight helps broaden policy attention beyond immediate issues and brings emerging challenges and opportunities into strategic debate. In **strategic planning and priority definition**, foresight supports alignment between long-term objectives and policy instruments, contributing to directionality in R&I systems.

Foresight was also recognised as a tool for **policy review and adaptation**, supporting reflexive evaluation and adjustment of strategies in response to changing conditions. This adaptive function is par-

ticularly relevant in contexts characterised by rapid technological change and geopolitical uncertainty.

At the same time, the discussions highlighted enduring **tensions between flexibility and formalisation**. While formal mandates and structures are necessary to ensure continuity and visibility of foresight within administrations, excessive formalisation risks constraining experimentation and critical reflection. Effective embedding therefore requires governance arrangements that institutionalise foresight while preserving its exploratory character.



Long-term visioning and priority-setting

Long-term visioning and priority-setting emerged as central functions of foresight within anticipatory R&I governance. Shared visions across different actors provide directionality, a key concept in contemporary innovation policy, by articulating desired futures and guiding the allocation of resources over time.

The mutual learnings highlighted the challenge of **reconciling long-term visions with short-term political and budgetary cycles**. Foresight offers a structured approach to managing this tension by linking long-term aspirations to intermediate pathways, milestones and policy mixes. In this way, foresight supports strategic continuity while allowing for adaptive implementation.

Foresight was also discussed as a **bridge between R&I strategies and broader societal challenges**, reinforcing the alignment of R&I priorities with sustainability, resilience and inclusiveness objectives. This integrative role is increasingly important within the ERA, where R&I policy is expected to contribute to wider societal transformations.

At the same time, concerns were raised about the **risks of technocratic visioning**. Visions developed primarily by experts may lack societal resonance and democratic legitimacy. Inclusive visioning processes, involving stakeholders and citizens, were therefore emphasised as essential for ensuring both the quality and acceptability of long-term priorities.

Foresight culture and futures literacy

The synthesis points to foresight culture as a foundational condition for the sustained use of foresight in R&I policymaking. Foresight culture was understood as an institutional capability encompassing **skills, routines, norms and values** that support anticipatory thinking across governance levels. This concept closely aligns with ERA ambitions to strengthen strategic intelligence and learning capacity within public administrations.

Central to foresight culture is **futures literacy**, i.e. the ability to understand, imagine and use the future as a resource for decision-making. Futures literacy was seen as relevant not only for specialised foresight units, but for policymakers, civil servants and, ultimately, society at large. Developing this capability requires repeated engagement in foresight processes and supportive organisational environments.

Communities of practice and collaborative platforms were identified as key enablers of foresight culture. By facilitating peer learning, knowledge exchange and mutual recognition, such communities help sustain engagement beyond individual projects and events. They also contribute to the gradual institutionalisation of foresight within national systems and at European level.

Good practices and transferable models

This chapter identifies concrete examples of effective approaches to organising, conducting, and institutionalising foresight in R&I policy. The chapter translates mutual learnings into transferable models and practical design choices that can inspire adaptation in different national and organisational settings.

Institutional arrangements for foresight in R&I policymaking

The mutual learning discussions revealed a wide diversity of institutional arrangements for foresight across European R&I systems. Despite differences in administrative traditions and governance cultures, several recurring good practices emerged that can be considered transferable across contexts within the European Research Area.

One key insight concerns the importance of **clear institutional anchoring** of foresight. Effective foresight arrangements are typically embedded within organisations that have both strategic proximity to decision-making and sufficient analytical autonomy. This includes dedicated foresight or strategic intelligence units within ministries, central coordination bodies, or agencies with a cross-sectoral mandate. Such positioning enables foresight to act as a bridge between evidence generation and policy deliberation, supporting anticipatory governance rather than remaining confined to analytical functions.

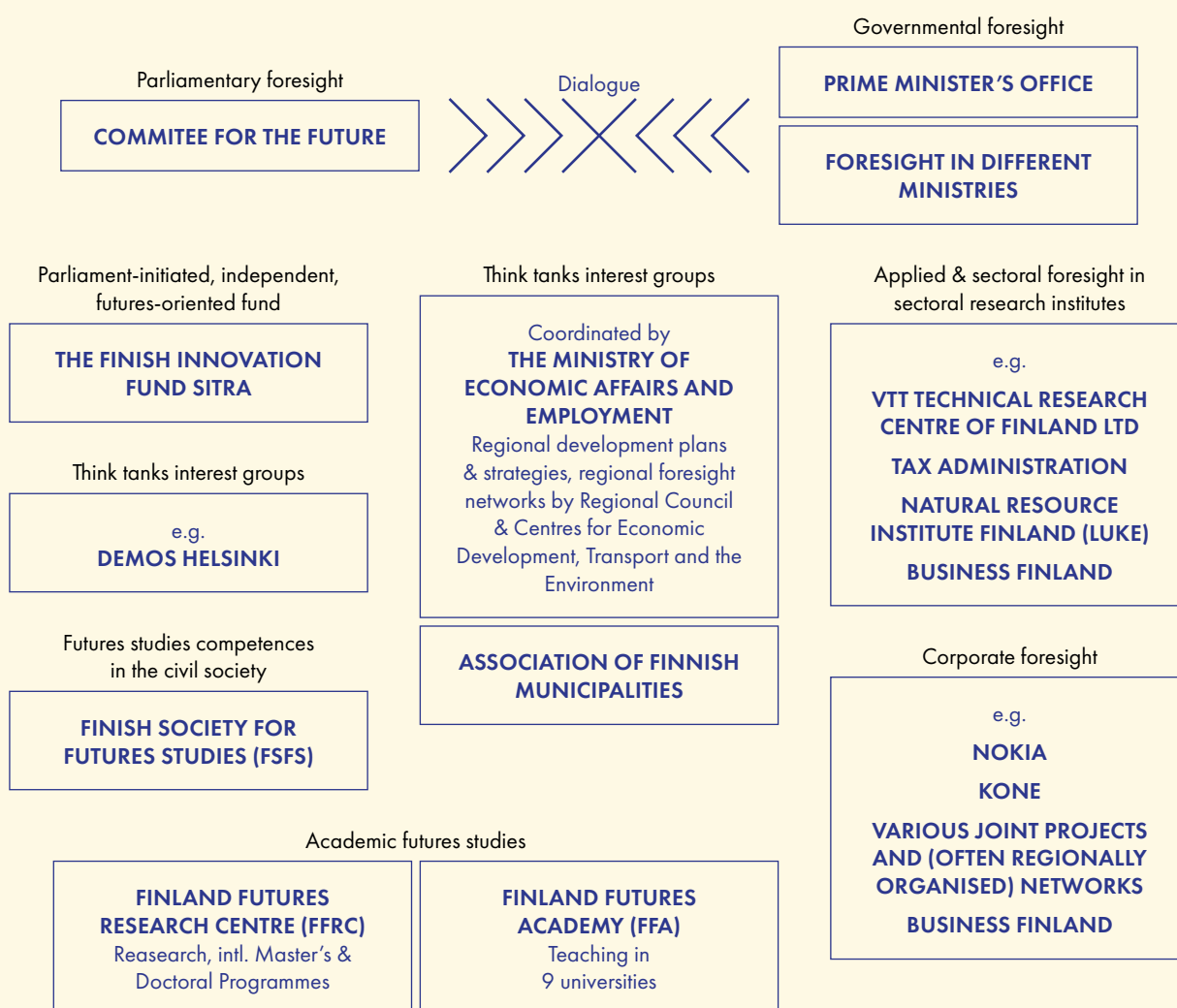
At the same time, the mutual learnings highlighted the value of **hybrid institutional models** that combine central coordination with distributed ownership. In these models, a small core unit provides methodological guidance, continuity and quality assurance, while foresight activities are co-produced with sectoral ministries, agencies or regional actors. This approach supports both coherence and contextual relevance, and is particularly well suited to the multi-level governance environments characteristic of the ERA.

Another transferable practice relates to **institutional continuity**. Participants stressed that foresight capacities develop cumulatively over time and therefore require stable mandates, predictable resources and sustained political support. Ad hoc or purely project-based arrangements were widely seen as insufficient for embedding foresight into policymaking routines, as they often lead to fragmented expertise, discontinuity of methods and limited organisational learning. Instead, foresight benefits from being recognised as a permanent public function linked to strategic planning, policy coordination and evaluation processes.

The Finnish example presented in Box 4.1 illustrates how continuity can be achieved through a distributed yet stable ecosystem. In Finland, foresight is not confined to a single project or institution, but embedded across multiple layers of governance and society. It is anchored at the highest political level through the Prime Minister's Office and interministerial coordination structures, complemented by parliamentary foresight through the Committee for the Future. At the same time, regional authorities, specialised research institutes, universities, civil soci-

ety organisations and private sector actors all contribute to a broader national foresight network. This combination of clear institutional mandates, long-term coordination mechanisms and broad societal participation enables foresight to function as an enduring strategic capability rather than a temporary initiative. The Finnish case therefore demonstrates that institutional continuity is strongest where foresight is mainstreamed across governance structures while retaining dedicated coordination and political visibility.

Institutional arrangements: Finnish national foresight ecosystem



Heinonen, Sirkka & Pouru-Mikkola, Laura (2024). Brief history of establishing the Futures field in Finland. In: Villman, Heinonen & Pouru-Mikkola (eds.). *Our World of Futures Studies as a Mosaic*. Futures Series 10. Finnish Society for Futures Studies. Helsinki.

Combining strategic intelligence and participation

Across the mutual learnings, foresight was consistently described as most effective when it combines robust strategic intelligence with participatory and deliberative methods. Rather than privileging individual tools, good practice lies in the thoughtful orchestration of methods across different stages of the foresight process.

A recurring insight concerned the value of **mixed-method approaches**. Horizon scanning, trend analysis and quantitative indicators provide an essential evidence base for identifying drivers of change and emerging issues. These analytical inputs are most impactful, however, when complemented by qualitative methods such as scenario building, visioning and backcasting, which enable exploration of uncertainties and normative dimensions of future development.

Participation emerged as a defining feature of transferable foresight models. Good practice involves engaging policymakers, experts and stakeholders not only as consultees, but as co-creators of foresight processes. This enhances the relevance

of insights, supports shared ownership of results and strengthens learning effects. The MLE discussions also highlighted that meaningful participation by policymakers themselves remains relatively rare in practice, particularly across different ministries and policy units. Yet such cross-departmental deliberation was repeatedly identified as critically important for addressing systemic challenges that cut across traditional policy silos. Creating dedicated spaces where policymakers from different domains can jointly reflect on long-term developments, strategic trade-offs and future priorities was therefore seen as an important condition for more coordinated and anticipatory governance. Importantly, participation was framed as scalable and adaptable, ranging from expert-based processes to broader stakeholder and citizen engagement, depending on the policy context and objectives.

The mutual learnings also highlighted the importance of **process sequencing**. Effective foresight typically unfolds through iterative cycles of framing, exploration, visioning and reflection, rather than linear or one-off exercises. This sequencing supports cumulative learning and allows foresight insights to be revisited as policy contexts evolve.

Combining intelligence and deliberation: Romania's digital transformation foresight

The Romanian foresight exercise "**Digital Transformation in the Romanian Public Administration**" supported the development of a future-ready digital competence framework for civil servants. Conducted by Institutul de Prospecția and the World Bank, it explored the digital roles and capabilities that Romania's public administration may require by 2032, as technologies, public services and citizens' expectations continue to evolve.

The exercise combined horizon scanning with exploratory and aspirational scenarios. More than **180 data points** were synthesised into 45 topics, covering technological, social, economic, political and value-related change. These inputs informed a three-layer scenario architecture: a **Baseline Scenario**, based on the implementation of current digital strategies; a **Context Scenario**, describing the probable evolution of Romania's digital society; and **five Aspirational Scenarios**, exploring more ambitious transformation pathways, including virtual assistants for public services, predictive governance and a digital-native administration.

Strategic intelligence was complemented by an iterative deliberative process. The initial materials were progressively discussed and refined through three online working sessions with World Bank and JRC experts, followed by an in-person workshop involving representatives of public administration, ICT, academia and civil society. Participants assessed drivers of change, enriched the scenarios and reviewed the digital roles needed to implement them.

By connecting emerging societal and technological developments with concrete administrative roles and competencies, the exercise translated alternative futures into actionable inputs for digital transformation and human-resources policy. It illustrates how expert analysis and stakeholder deliberation can reinforce each other, producing policy insights that are both forward-looking and grounded in institutional realities. See more on [Futures4Europe](#).

Stakeholder engagement and co-creation

Stakeholder engagement was identified as a cornerstone of good foresight practice and a key enabler of anticipatory governance. Across the mutual learnings, effective engagement was associated with foresight processes that are inclusive, transparent and purpose-driven.

Good practice involves **early and continuous engagement** of stakeholders, particularly policymakers who are expected to use foresight insights. Involving policy actors from the framing stage helps align foresight questions with real policy needs and increases the likelihood that results will inform decision-making. Similarly, engaging external stakeholders, such as researchers, industry, civil society and, in some cases, citizens, broadens perspectives and helps address complex, cross-sectoral challenges.

The discussions also highlighted the importance of **managing expectations**. Not all foresight processes can or should aim for consensus, and good practice involves clarifying the purpose, scope and intended use of foresight from the outset. Transparent communication about roles, timelines and limitations was seen as essential for maintaining trust and constructive engagement.

Co-creation emerged as a particularly valuable approach for long-term visioning and priority-setting. When stakeholders are actively involved in shaping visions and pathways, foresight contributes not only to better-informed strategies, but also to legitimacy and collective commitment, which are the key conditions for transformative R&I policies.

Co-creation for legitimacy: the Manchester Science and Innovation Audit

An instructive example of stakeholder engagement and co-creation is the Manchester Science and Innovation Audit, presented by Luke Georgiou. The case demonstrates how an inclusive foresight-oriented process can support the implementation of a regional vision in the field of advanced materials by aligning

research strengths, economic opportunities and institutional actors around a shared strategic agenda. A central feature of the initiative was the creation of an inclusive consortium of around 30 stakeholders, bringing together representatives from business, local government, universities and intermediary organisations.

This broad partnership ensured that the exercise was not confined to academic analysis, but was firmly grounded in the economic realities, governance structures and development ambitions of the wider city region.

An important lesson from the case is that successful engagement does not always depend on the explicit use of foresight terminology. Many participants did not necessarily identify their involvement as participation in a “foresight exercise”, yet they clearly recognised the practical need for a long-term strategic vision. This suggests that stakeholder engagement is often most effective when framed around concrete challenges and shared opportunities rather than methodological labels. The process also played a key role in building common vision and institutional credibility. It helped strengthen working relationships between the University of Man-

chester and regional authorities, while external expert support added legitimacy when mobilising major investments, including support for the National Graphene Institute. In this sense, foresight functioned not only as an analytical tool, but as a mechanism for coalition-building and strategic positioning.

Finally, the Manchester experience illustrates the importance of an ecosystem approach. Addressing one bottleneck in a regional innovation system often reveals the next challenge, requiring continuous adaptation and collaboration. Stakeholders therefore become co-creators of long-term strategic resilience rather than participants in a one-off study. MLE4 discussions on long-term visioning highlighted that inclusive co-creation processes help ensure that strategic priorities are both credible and socially legitimate. See [Futures4Europe](#).

Communication and translation into policy action

The mutual learnings consistently underscored communication as a critical dimension of transferable foresight practice. Good practice goes beyond dissemination and focuses on translation, ensuring that foresight insights are meaningful and usable within policy contexts.

Effective communication strategies are **tailored to policy windows, organisational cultures and decision-making formats**. Short briefs, visual summaries and narrative formats were repeatedly identified as more effective for engaging policymakers than comprehensive technical reports alone. Such formats help bridge the gap between long-term perspectives and immediate policy concerns. The MLE discussions also highlighted that communication is most effective when policymakers and high-level decision-makers are involved directly in foresight

processes rather than only receiving final outputs. Personal interaction, dialogue-based formats and opportunities for direct engagement with senior decision-makers were seen as particularly valuable for strengthening ownership, trust and the likelihood that foresight insights will influence strategic decisions.

Another transferable practice involves **embedding communication throughout the foresight process**. When communication accompanies foresight from the framing stage onwards, it supports continuous dialogue between foresight producers and users. This iterative interaction strengthens mutual understanding, builds trust and increases the likelihood that foresight insights will influence policy debates.

Importantly, communication was also linked to **institutional learning**. By making foresight visible and accessible within organisations, communication contributes to normalising anticipatory thinking and integrating it into everyday policy practice.

Communication as translation: the European Commission's Joint Research Centre

An example of translating foresight into policy action is provided by the work of the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) and its EU Policy Lab, which presented their approach to communicating foresight within the European Commission. The case demonstrates how communication can become an integral component of anticipatory governance by ensuring that foresight insights are not only produced, but actively used in policymaking. A central lesson from the JRC experience is the importance of audience-centred communication. The primary target group consists of policymakers within the European Commission, but communication is also directed towards officials in other EU institutions, Member States, international organisations, scientists and foresight practitioners. Recognising that policymakers are often busy, highly informed and confronted with information overload, foresight outputs are designed to be concise, relevant to current policy priorities and easy to absorb.

The JRC approach also illustrates the value of using multiple formats and channels. Alongside flagship Strategic Foresight Reports, the Commission employs policy briefs, visual materials,

interactive workshops, training sessions and digital engagement tools. Examples presented included the Megatrends Hub, scenario exploration system and thematic toolkits that help translate abstract long-term developments into practical resources for policy discussion. These formats make foresight more tangible and actionable for different user groups. Another key feature is the strong emphasis on co-creation and participation. Foresight processes are designed to involve stakeholders from the outset rather than only at the dissemination stage. By engaging policy actors early, the JRC ensures that foresight exercises are aligned with real policy needs and that outputs are more likely to feed directly into strategic discussions, agenda-setting and policy design. The JRC case highlights communication as a means of building long-term institutional capability. Through training, networks and accessible tools, the Commission uses communication not only to share findings, but to strengthen futures literacy across administrations. In this way, communication becomes a mechanism for embedding foresight into everyday policymaking practice and supporting a more adaptive, strategic and future-oriented European governance system.

See [Futures4Europe](#).

Cross-country learning and European-level transferability

A distinctive strength of the MLEs lies in their facilitation of cross-country learning, which emerged as a good practice in its own right. The mutual learning format enabled participants to compare institutional arrangements, methods and governance approaches across diverse national contexts, identifying both common challenges and context-specific solutions.

Transferability was not framed as replication of models, but as **adaptation of principles**. Participants emphasised that while institutional settings differ, core principles, such as process orientation, participation, alignment with policy cycles and commitment to learning, are widely applicable across the ERA. The MLEs supported this adaptive transfer by providing space for reflection on “what works, under which conditions, and why”.

At European level, the discussions highlighted the potential of foresight to support greater **coherence and coordination across national R&I systems**. Communities of practice, mutual learning formats and shared platforms were identified as key infrastructures for sustaining this exchange and for strengthening anticipatory governance capacity across Europe.

Rather than promoting a single model, the MLEs highlight foresight as a **configurable governance capability**, adaptable to different contexts but grounded in shared principles aligned with ERA ambitions for anticipatory, adaptive and mission-oriented policymaking. The transferability of foresight practices thus lies not in copying structures, but in cultivating capacities, routines and cultures that enable policymakers to engage constructively with uncertainty and long-term change.

Impact of MLEs on foresight practice and institutionalisation

The MLEs were designed not only as opportunities for exchange, but as instruments for strengthening foresight capacities and supporting the gradual institutionalisation of anticipatory approaches in R&I policymaking across Europe. This chapter draws primarily on the survey of MLE participants, which was explicitly designed to capture perceived effects and early signals of change, rather than to establish direct causality. Feedback collected from participants indicates that their impact can be observed at multiple and interconnected levels: individual, organisational and systemic. While the effects naturally vary across contexts, organisational maturity and prior experience, the survey results point to a broadly positive contribution of the MLE series to capability building, networking and the normalisation of foresight in public governance.

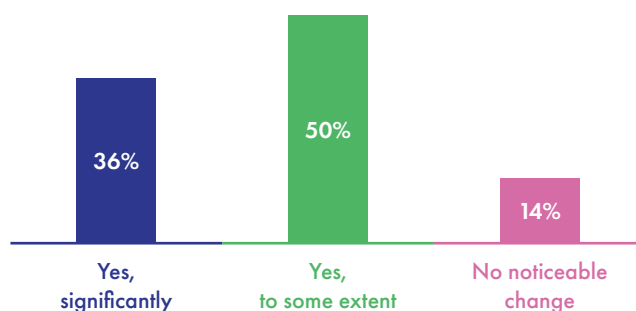
The questionnaire was distributed to 112 delivered addresses, yielding 37 responses and 22 completed responses (response rate ~19.6%, completion rate ~59.5%). The sample includes respondents across key stakeholder groups: national/regional policymakers (36%), research/academia (27%), and R&I funding/implementing agencies (14%), alongside advisory bodies and foresight practitioners. Respondents represent a range of European contexts (e.g. Portugal, Hungary, Czechia, Moldova, Slovakia, and others). Importantly, participants entered the MLEs with heterogeneous prior experience with foresight: about 18% reported no prior experience, 32% limited/ad hoc exposure, 14% regular use, and 36% advanced/expert level.

Impact on skills, understanding and confidence

At the **individual level**, the most immediate impact of the MLEs was on participants' understanding of foresight and their confidence in using it. Respondents consistently reported that participation improved their awareness of how foresight is applied in different national and institutional settings, thereby broadening their practical understanding of what foresight can achieve in policymaking. Comparative exposure to approaches across Europe appears to have been particularly valuable for participants who previously had only limited or ad hoc experience with foresight.

The survey also suggests that the MLEs contributed to greater futures literacy: participants felt better able to reflect on long-term developments, uncertainty and strategic options in policy contexts. For many, foresight became less abstract and more operational. Some respondents explicitly noted a shift from scepticism about foresight towards recognising its practical usefulness for strategic planning and decision-making. Others highlighted that the MLEs strengthened their ability to assess the quality of externally commissioned foresight studies or to apply lighter-touch foresight approaches within their own organisations.

Did the MLE(s) influence how you personally approach foresight today?



Another important individual effect relates to professional identity and confidence. Participants frequently valued the opportunity to meet peers facing similar challenges across Europe. This helped reinforce the sense that foresight practitioners and policy actors form part of a wider community of practice, which can be particularly important in institutional environments where anticipatory work remains niche or weakly recognised.

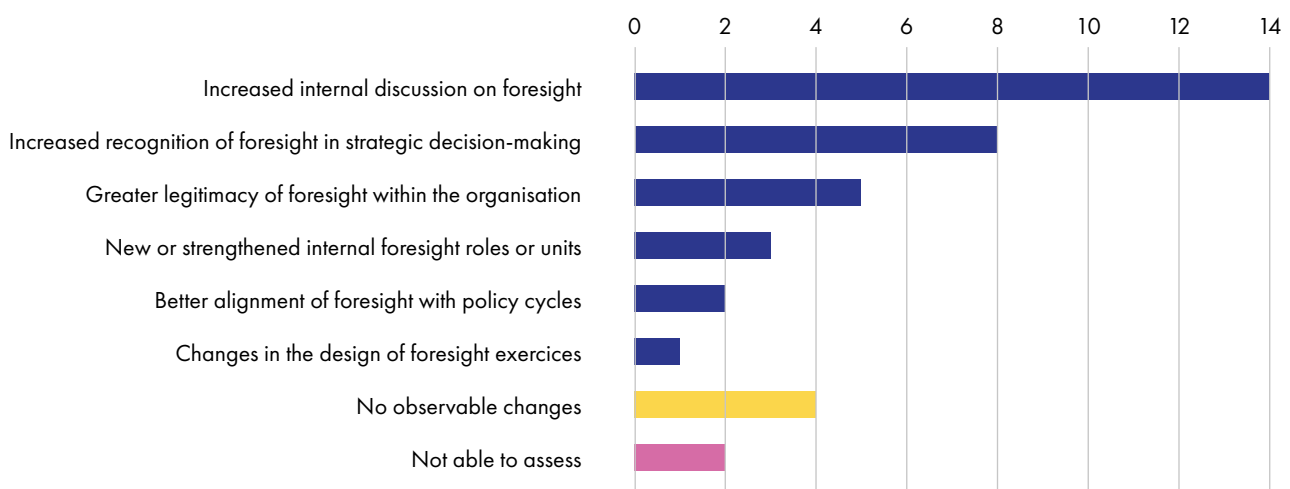
Impact on processes, routines and legitimacy

At **organisational level**, impacts were generally more gradual, but nonetheless meaningful. The most common effect reported by respondents was increased internal discussion about foresight and its relevance for strategy and policymaking. This suggests that MLE participation often acts as a catalyst for putting foresight onto organisational agendas, even where formal structures are not yet in place.

In several cases, participation also appears to have strengthened the legitimacy of foresight within organisations. Respondents indicated that the MLEs helped colleagues and managers better understand the strategic value of foresight, contributing to stronger recognition of foresight as a valid input into planning and decision-making. Such legitimacy effects are particularly important in organisations where foresight competes with more established evidence sources or where short-term operational pressures dominate.

More formal organisational changes, such as the creation of dedicated units, revised planning routines or stronger alignment with policy cycles, were less frequently observed, which is unsurprising given that institutional change often unfolds over longer periods. However, examples from the survey suggest that the MLEs did stimulate concrete follow-up actions, such as planning new foresight exercises, designing services for policy stakeholders, or integrating foresight elements into upcoming strategy processes. In this sense, the MLEs appear to function as enabling interventions that help organisations move from awareness towards experimentation and gradual routinisation.

To your knowledge, did participation in the MLE(s) lead to any of the following in your organisation?



Impact on networks, exchange and shared language

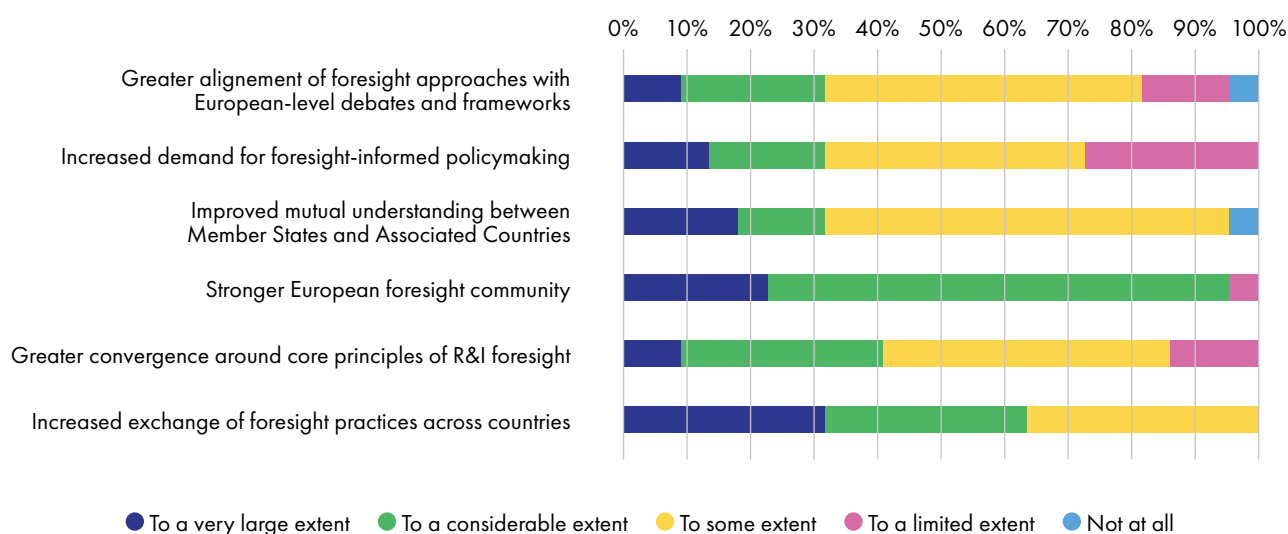
At the **systemic level**, the clearest contribution of the MLEs was to strengthen European networks for foresight and enabling cross-country exchange. Participants rated the MLEs particularly highly as mechanisms for sharing practices, governance models and experiences across different national contexts. This is significant because foresight institutionalisation often depends not only on domestic reforms, but also on access to peer learning, external reference points and examples of what is possible elsewhere.

The survey also indicates that many participants remained in contact with peers after the events, using these relationships for informal advice, invitations

to workshops, exchange of methods and, in some cases, collaborative initiatives. Such “weak ties” are often highly valuable in policy learning systems, as they allow rapid diffusion of ideas and practical solutions without requiring formal institutional arrangements.

The MLEs also contributed to the emergence of a more shared language around foresight in R&I policy. While respondents acknowledged continued diversity in concepts and terminology across countries, the events helped create common reference points and improve mutual understanding between actors operating in different administrative cultures. This kind of semantic convergence is an important, if often overlooked, component of institutionalisation.

To what extent did the MLE(s) contribute to the following at system level?



MLEs as a learning instrument

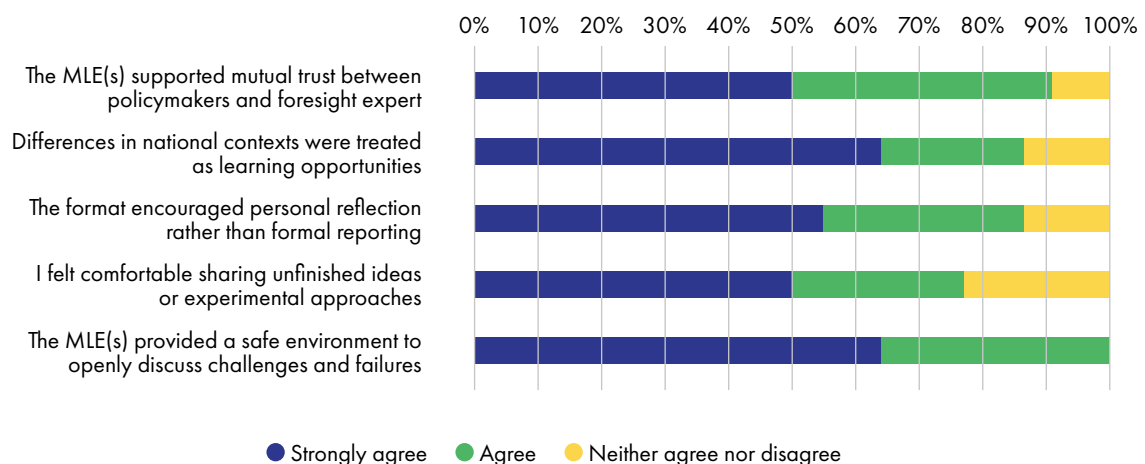
Beyond specific impacts, the survey strongly suggests that the MLE format itself has distinctive value as a learning instrument. Participants repeatedly described the events as **open, reflective and conducive to peer learning**. A particularly strong finding was that respondents viewed the MLEs as safe spaces in which challenges, uncertainties and even failures could be discussed candidly, something that is often difficult within formal policy settings.

This “**safe space**” function matters because foresight frequently deals with ambiguity, contested assumptions and untested ideas. Learning in such contexts requires environments where experimentation is

possible and reputational risk is low. The MLEs appear to have provided precisely this type of setting. Participants also valued the opportunity to compare different national approaches not as competing models, but as sources of mutual learning.

The combination of expert inputs, interactive sessions and peer dialogue seems to have been particularly effective. Rather than relying on one-way presentations, the MLEs enabled **co-learning between policymakers, practitioners and researchers**. This suggests that mutual learning formats can complement formal training by combining knowledge transfer with reflection, networking and confidence-building.

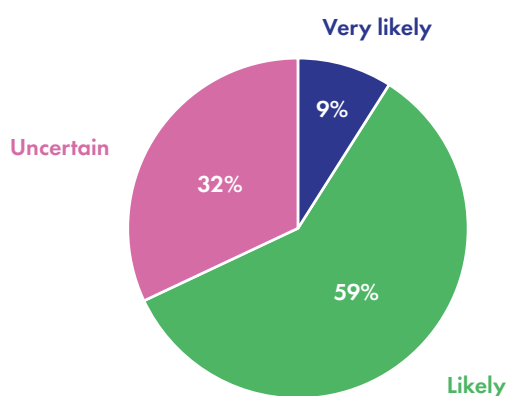
To what extent do you agree with the following statements?



Early signs of sustained change

Although the survey captured relatively early effects, it also identified encouraging signs of sustained change. Some respondents reported continued use of MLE insights in policy discussions, strategy development or programme design. Others observed stronger national or regional foresight networks emerging after participation. These examples indicate that MLE effects can extend beyond the events themselves and feed into ongoing policy processes.

In your view, what is the likelihood that the effects of the MLE(s) will be sustained over time?



There were also indications of **replication**, with a smaller number of respondents noting that MLE-type formats had inspired similar workshops or learning processes in their own organisations or countries. While still limited, this is an important sign of deeper institutionalisation: when learning formats themselves begin to spread, not only their content.

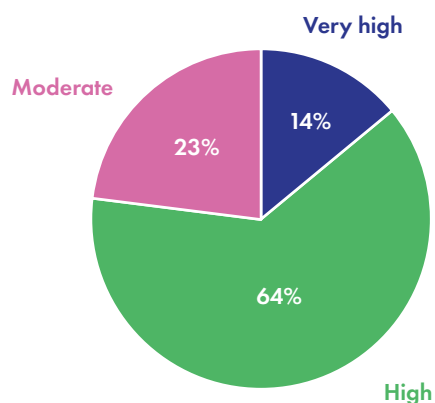
Participants were cautiously optimistic about the sustainability of impacts. Most expected effects to continue, although many also stressed that durability would depend on follow-up mechanisms, continued interaction and stronger embedding into regular policy routines. Suggestions included recurring meetings, foresight training for civil servants, practical tools for integrating foresight into everyday policy work, and broader involvement of senior decision-makers.

Overall added value of MLEs

The survey results indicate that the MLEs generated substantial added value for the European foresight landscape. Participants overwhelmingly assessed the initiative positively and strongly supported the continuation of similar activities beyond the project period. This suggests that the demand for structured peer-learning infrastructures in foresight remains high across Europe.

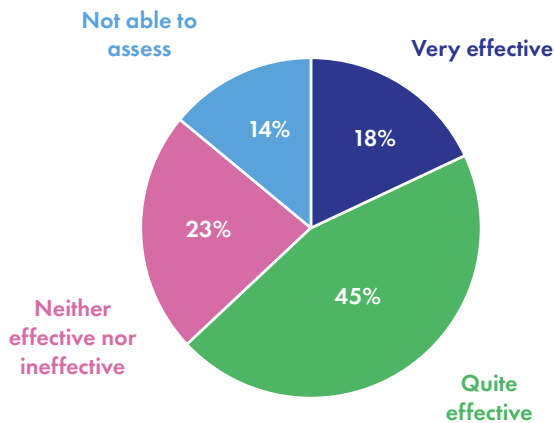
The added value of the MLEs can be summarised in four main contributions. First, they build individual capability by improving **understanding, skills and confidence**. Second, they support organisational change by increasing the **visibility and legitimacy** of foresight within institutions. Third, they strengthen the European ecosystem through **networking, exchange** and the emergence of shared reference points. Fourth, they provide a rare **learning environment** where experimentation, reflection and candid dialogue are possible.

Overall, how would you assess the added value of the MLE(s)?



The survey also indicates that the impact of the MLEs is reinforced by complementary digital infrastructure, particularly the **Futures4Europe platform**. A majority of respondents reported using the platform either regularly or occasionally, suggesting that it already functions as a recognised access point for the European foresight community. Respondents generally viewed an online platform as an effective instrument for mutual learning, knowledge sharing and maintaining connections between events, with many rating it as quite effective or very effective.

How effective is an online platform such as Futures4Europe in supporting mutual learning and knowledge exchange on foresight among policymakers and practitioners?



These findings underline the importance of **combining face-to-face mutual learning formats with continuous online community tools**. While the MLEs create high-value spaces for trust-building, reflection and intensive exchange, the platform can help sustain momentum between events by providing access to resources, examples, methods, experts and emerging initiatives. In this sense, the platform can serve as a continuity mechanism that extends the reach and durability of the MLE series. Qualitative feedback also suggests that lower levels of use may sometimes reflect limited time and competing priorities rather than dissatisfaction with the platform itself. This implies that future impact may depend less on demonstrating relevance and more on ensuring usability, visibility and integration into participants' everyday professional routines.

At the same time, the results underline that institutionalisation is a long-term process. While individual and network effects are visible relatively quickly, deeper organisational transformation requires continuity, leadership support and integration into formal policy processes. The MLEs therefore appear most effective when understood not as isolated events, but as part of a broader European infrastructure for anticipatory governance and strategic intelligence in R&I policymaking, supported by both recurring peer-learning events and digital community platforms such as Futures4Europe.

From mutual learning to future-oriented collective intelligence in the European R&I policy

The experience of the MLEs demonstrates that foresight capacity in Europe is strengthened not only through better methods or more studies, but through repeated interaction between people, institutions and policy communities. The five MLEs showed that when policymakers, agencies, practitioners and experts meet in a trusted setting to compare experiences, challenge assumptions and reflect on practical solutions, the result is more than peer exchange. It is the gradual formation of collective intelligence based on the shared capacity of European actors to interpret change, anticipate challenges and respond strategically across national and institutional boundaries.

This insight is particularly relevant for Europe that faces increasingly interconnected transitions like technological competition, climate neutrality, demographic pressures, economic security, defence-related innovation, strategic dependencies and the governance of artificial intelligence. These challenges cannot be addressed through isolated national foresight exercises or one-off reports. They require permanent mechanisms that connect intelligence gathering, strategic dialogue and coordinated learning across Europe. The MLE experience suggests that mutual learning can become one of these mechanisms if it is further institutionalised and linked more directly to policy cycles.

From project activity to permanent ERA capability

A first strategic implication is that mutual learning on foresight should not end with the lifetime of individual projects. Temporary initiatives can demonstrate value, but durable impact requires continuity. The MLE model has shown sufficient maturity to evolve from a project activity into a permanent ERA capability that is supporting anticipatory governance.

A practical next step would be to establish a regular **European Mutual Learning Cycle on Foresight**, convened annually or semi-annually, linked to ERA priorities and rotating across Member States and Associated Countries. Rather than generic conferences, these cycles should focus on specific policy challenges, for example AI governance, future skills, research security, green industrial transformation, widening participation or mission implementation. Each cycle could combine peer exchange, practical tool sessions and policy reflection.

To maintain momentum between meetings, the cycle should be supported by a light but continuous secretariat function, potentially connected to existing European structures or future ERA governance mechanisms. This would ensure continuity of networks, follow-up of recommendations and curation of lessons learned.

Strengthening the role of EU institutions

EU institutions are uniquely positioned to convert dispersed national learning into European strategic capacity. The MLE experience suggests several concrete roles.

First, the European Commission and relevant ERA bodies could use mutual learning outputs more systematically as an **input into ERA policy agendas, strategic programming and policy support instruments**. Lessons from national foresight systems often remain within expert circles, and stronger transmission into formal policy channels would significantly increase value.

Second, EU institutions could sponsor a **European Foresight Practice Observatory** building on Futures4Europe and related platforms. This should go beyond listing projects and instead provide concise case notes on what worked, under which conditions, at what cost and with what institutional effects. Policymakers often need practical intelligence, not lengthy documentation.

Third, EU-level actors could help professionalise demand for foresight by issuing common guidance on commissioning foresight, **integrating foresight into policy cycles**, and evaluating foresight quality. Many administrations still struggle less with supply than with intelligent use of foresight outputs. In this context, international communities of practice such as the OECD Government Foresight Community provide a valuable example of how regular exchange among policymakers can strengthen institutional learning, improve understanding of foresight applications, and build more informed demand for anticipatory approaches within public administrations.

Fourth, foresight mutual learning should be more explicitly **connected to neighbouring agendas** such as industrial policy, resilience planning, regional transformation and public sector innovation. This would prevent foresight from being perceived as a niche R&I instrument only.

Finally, stronger exchange and cooperation should also be encouraged between European foresight initiatives and **broader international foresight communities and networks**, including those coordinated by organisations such as the OECD and UNESCO. Such interaction would help connect European experiences with global debates on anticipatory governance, futures literacy and strategic intelligence, while also enabling mutual learning across different policy cultures and governance contexts.

Priorities for national and regional administrations

The MLEs repeatedly showed that institutionalisation ultimately happens within national and regional administrations. European exchange can inspire, but domestic routines determine whether foresight becomes consequential.

National governments should therefore move from occasional studies toward **embedded foresight functions**. This does not always require large dedicated units. In many contexts, a small cross-government foresight coordination function linked to strategy offices or central ministries may be sufficient, provided it has political access and continuity. Foresight is most valuable when attached to real decisions with deadlines and ownership.

Another priority is **capability building inside the civil service**. Short modular training programmes on horizon scanning, scenario use, uncertainty framing and strategic communication could be integrated into public administration training systems. The survey findings in this booklet suggest that confidence and understanding often improve quickly once exposure begins. Regional administrations should also continue to play an important role in the European foresight landscape. Many transitions are territorially differentiated, and regions are often closer to firms, clusters, universities and citizens. Indeed, regional foresight linked to smart specialisation processes represented one of the early drivers of foresight development and experimentation in Europe.

Building on this experience, regional foresight can continue to serve as an important laboratory for place-based transformation, stakeholder engagement and anticipatory governance.

Stronger role for practitioners and the foresight community

The MLE series also highlighted responsibilities for foresight practitioners themselves. Institutional demand grows when foresight is credible, usable and responsive.

Practitioners should invest more in **translation capacity**: concise outputs, visual formats, decision-ready scenarios and facilitation methods tailored to busy policymakers. Communication emerged repeatedly as a decisive success factor across the MLEs.

Second, practitioners should shift from selling methods to **solving problems**. Many decision-makers are less interested in whether something is labelled foresight than whether it helps them make better strategic choices. Demand often increases when foresight is framed around live policy questions rather than methodological terminology. At the same time, greater policy relevance should not come at the expense of methodological rigour, long-term orientation or the exploration of multiple alternative futures. Maintaining these core characteristics is essential if foresight is to provide genuine strategic added value rather than simply reinforcing short-term policy agendas or predetermined priorities.

Third, the community should become more systematic in **learning from failure** and mixed results. Europe has many success stories but fewer honest accounts of exercises that had little uptake or weak design. A mature field requires reflective learning, not only celebration.

Fourth, practitioners should actively **mentor newer countries, regions and institutions** entering the field. Peer-to-peer accompaniment can often build capability faster than formal training alone.

Building foresight culture and futures literacy

The later MLEs moved attention from methods to foresight culture. This remains one of the most strategic lessons of the whole series. Without supportive organisational norms, even technically strong foresight exercises remain marginal.

Foresight culture can be strengthened through several practical steps:

- regular use of future-oriented discussion in management and policy meetings;
- incentives for cross-department collaboration on long-term issues;
- recognition of strategic reflection as legitimate administrative work;
- visible leadership support for anticipatory approaches;
- communities of practice connecting analysts, programme managers and senior officials.

Equally important is **futures literacy beyond specialist units**. Europe would benefit if more civil servants, agency staff and public leaders were comfortable discussing uncertainty, multiple pathways and unintended consequences. This is not about turning everyone into a futurist. It is about normalising future-oriented reasoning in governance. Universities, schools of public administration and executive academies could play a stronger role by integrating foresight modules into leadership and policy curricula.

Futures4Europe - the digital layer of collective intelligence

The survey results in this booklet indicate that participants value the Futures4Europe platform as a complementary tool, but that usage depends on visibility, time and integration into everyday practice. This points to a broader lesson, namely that digital platforms do not create communities automatically, but they can significantly amplify communities when linked to active processes.

The platform could evolve into the **digital layer of European foresight collective intelligence** if it prioritises practical utility. This may include short templates for commissioning foresight, peer directories of experts and institutions, reusable facilitation tools, alerts on emerging foresight outputs relevant to policymakers or communities around specific themes such as AI, health, climate or regions.

The strongest model is hybrid comprising of trusted face-to-face exchange through MLE-type events, reinforced by continuous digital connectivity.

Vision for the future

Looking ahead, Europe should aim not simply to “continue MLEs”, but to build a **European Foresight Learning System**. Such a system would combine recurring mutual learning events, digital collaboration, training, practical guidance, peer support and stronger links to policy decision points. The deepest lesson of the Eye of Europe MLE series is that foresight institutionalisation is not primarily about creating more reports. It is about creating relationships, routines, confidence and shared language that allow institutions to use the future intelligently.

Mutual learning transforms isolated experience into common capability. Community building transforms scattered actors into a strategic ecosystem. Foresight culture transforms occasional exercises into everyday governance practice. In line with the Eye of Europe vision², foresight should be understood as a shared space for imagination, inquiry, participation and collective reflection that strengthens Europe’s capacity to act under conditions of complexity and uncertainty. If Europe wishes to govern long-term transitions more effectively, it should treat these capacities not as side activities, but as part of its core innovation, governance and social infrastructure. The MLE series has shown that the foundations already exist. The next challenge is to scale and sustain them.

2. See the Manifesto of the R&I Foresight Community – Foresight as a Key Social Infrastructure for Europe <https://www.futures4europe.eu/post/foresight-as-a-key-social-infrastructure-for-europe-s68ok>.

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