

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT IN FLANDERS

FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS,
STRATEGIC DRIVERS AND
PRACTICAL GUIDANCE



INTRODUCTION

Strategic foresight builds resilience in policymaking systems by supporting governments to perceive, make sense of, and act upon the future as it emerges. This approach enables effective anticipation of both emerging opportunities and potential adverse effects, facilitating the formulation of forward-looking policies that align with the evolving needs and expectations of society. It is instrumental in stress-testing current systems, facilitating structural changes, and spurring innovation based on megatrends and potential future crises.

The Government of Flanders has made efforts to strengthen its strategic foresight capacity. Informed by a thorough OECD assessment of strategic foresight within the policymaking system in Flanders, the following blueprint is organized into three key sections:



Foundational elements: addressing the vision, mission, and enabling environment for strategic foresight in the context of Flanders



Strategic drivers: delineating seven primary roles for strategic foresight



Practical guidance: detailing the functions envisioned for strategic foresight in Flanders and its role in fostering cross-regional dialogue.

This blueprint is the result of a collaboration between the OECD and the Government of Flanders' Strategic Insights and Analyses (SIA) unit within the Chancellery and Foreign Office. This blueprint was designed by Bruno Monteiro, Piret Tõnurist and Julia Staudt (OECD Observatory of Public Sector Innovation) in collaboration with Peter De Smedt and Flo Van den Broeck (Strategic Insights and Analyses, Chancellery and Foreign Office, Government of Flanders). The authors express gratitude to the participants who actively contributed to the interactive sessions, providing valuable input on the systemic dynamics of Flanders' strategic foresight and collaboratively shaping the elements of this blueprint.

OVERVIEW

FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS

VISION & MISSION

The Flanders Chancellery and Foreign Office's vision for policymaking in Flanders ensures that public administration is able to future proof policies and services with the purpose of improving their resilience by adopting evidence-based, inclusive and systemic approaches. The mission is to empower policy makers with actionable approaches that mobilise activities and tools.

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

The existence of a proper authorizing environment for strategic foresight lies on three basic elements:

- I. **Mandate:** Strategic Foresight needs to be endorsed and legitimized by high-level sponsors.
- II. **Capacity-building:** Strategic Foresight needs to have sustained initiatives to spread and improve skills among public servants and managers.
- III. **Communication:** Strategic Foresight has to be communicated in accessible ways and its value made visible to target audiences.

STRATEGIC DRIVERS

BLUEPRINT

This blueprint sets a strategic direction for Strategic Foresight in Flanders through the prioritisation of its usefulness for policy making. These seven roles that Strategic Foresight plays define its potential for value-creation Flanders:

1. Promoting the engagement of stakeholders;
2. Supporting a proactive and prospective Government;
3. Adopting evidence-informed and data-driven approaches;
4. Designing robust and resilient policies;

5. Enhancing agility, flexibility and innovation;
6. Encouraging learning cycles;
7. Spearheading the multi-level dialogues on futures.

Driven by these roles, Flanders can put in motion a roadmap for multi-level strategic foresight that was collaboratively drafted with Strategic Foresight ecosystem stakeholders.

PRACTICAL GUIDANCE

FUNCTIONS

Strategic Foresight can be adopted through an incremental process that kick-starts its adoption and use at the level of organisations and/or teams.

The Flanders Chancellery and Foreign Office has defined four functions to enable organisations and/or teams to engage in practice with Strategic Foresight. These functions answer to their challenges and needs and increase the quality in the design and delivery of their activities and outputs.

FUTURE @ REGIONS

Flanders can play a leading role in the promotion of multi-level strategic foresight dialogues on futures, ensuring that the regional perspective is embedded in policymaking.

For that purpose, specific actions appear as especially relevant at this stage:

- Shared scans
- Scenario approaches
- Opportunity spotting



FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS

FOR STRATEGIC FORESIGHT
IN FLANDERS



STRATEGIC FORESIGHT VISION & MISSION



VISION

To become a strategic “knowledge broker” in times of change, disruptions, and uncertainties, by enabling future-proof, systemic, inclusive and evidence-informed insights that enrich multi-level strategic foresight and systemic thinking within government.

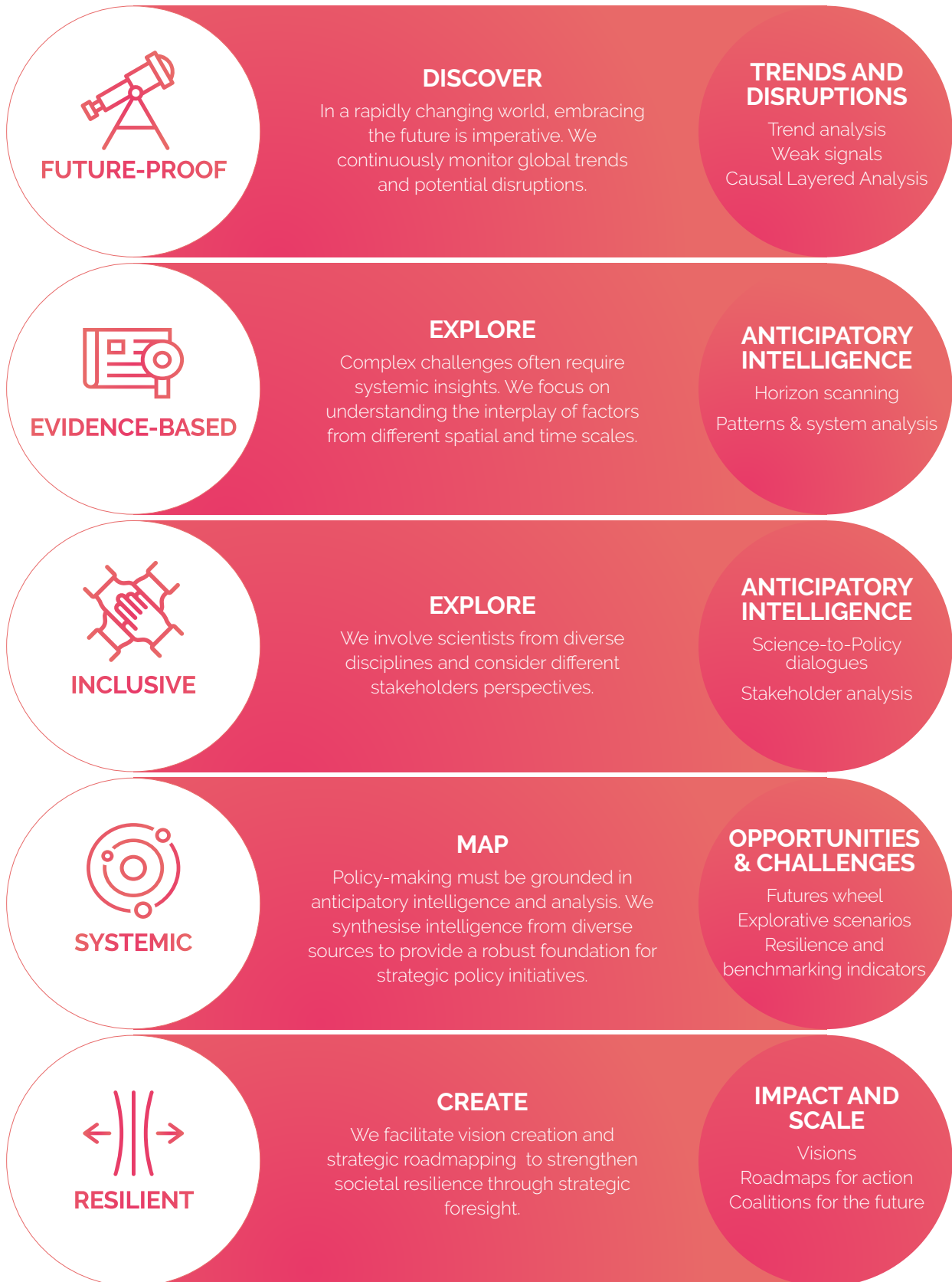


MISSION

Our mission is to empower policy-makers with actionable strategic insights and analyses, to navigate complex challenges, to support effective policy-making, and to foster opportunities for a resilient society.

PRINCIPLES, ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

PRINCIPLES → ACTIVITIES → OUTPUTS & TOOLS



ENABLING ENVIRONMENT



MANDATE

Strategic foresight needs to be **endorsed and legitimized** by high-level decision makers.

A **sustained demand** needs to exist for strategic foresight practices and outputs.

*These are the fundamental elements ensuring that an **enabling environment** is in place for strategic foresight vision and mission to be enacted in Flanders.*



CAPACITY-BUILDING

Public servants and managers in Flanders need to be provided with **future literacy and access to relevant tools and methods**.

Regular **strategic foresight training** needs to be available.



COMMUNICATION

Foresight needs to be **communicated in accessible ways** to relevant users and stakeholders.

Communication channels need to be bidirectional to allow for a **dialogue around strategic foresight**.

STRATEGIC DRIVERS

FOR STRATEGIC FORESIGHT
IN FLANDERS

WHY A BLUEPRINT?

Envisioning change for strategic foresight in Flanders

*This blueprint provides insights for a **transformation of the current state of affairs** – as revealed through the assessment report – to an improved multi-level strategic foresight system in Flanders.*

*The strategic foresight roles put forward in this blueprint are organized around both **critical challenge and opportunity areas** that **guide the transformation** of the strategic foresight system for Flanders.*

Through each of the mechanisms, strategic foresight can bring value to Flanders and, in particular, the Government of Flanders, by helping to ensure:



WHAT IS THIS BLUEPRINT?

Set the direction for change



*This blueprint provides insights for **direction and commitment for a transformation** of the strategic foresight system in the Government of Flanders.*



*The blueprint supports to prioritise **usefulness for policy making purposes**: for that reason, it introduces **seven strategic foresight roles** that set the objectives and highlight the potential value-creation brought by the envisaged transformation.*

7 ROLES OF STRATEGIC FORESIGHT IN FLANDERS

Role 1 Stakeholder engagement

Meaningful conversations and collaborations are possible around strategic foresight in the Flanders ecosystem.

Role 2 Production and delivery of strategic insights

Strategic foresight ensures that Government has timely access to insights regarding possible opportunities and threats.

Role 3 Data analysis and contextual awareness

Decision makers access and use relevant and actionable information relevant to Flanders via anticipatory intelligence tools and platforms.

Role 4 Stress-testing

Policies and initiatives are systematically stress-tested and improved through feedback from strategic foresight.

Role 5 Policy innovation

Strategic foresight is directly used for input for policy and service innovation in the Government of Flanders.

Role 6 Evaluation and knowledge management

Cross-cutting networks and platforms are created around strategic foresight to support peer-exchanges, sharing of learnings and the systematic evaluation of impacts.

Role 7 Multi-level dialogues

Flanders plays a leading role in collecting and analyzing regional trends and promoting future-oriented approaches internationally.

WHERE DOES FLANDERS STAND RIGHT NOW?

WHERE DOES FLANDERS WANT TO BE IN 5 YEARS?

DEMAND AND MANDATE

Needs to strengthen the mandate to promote multi-level strategic foresight work across the Government of Flanders with responsibilities for cross-sectoral and collaborative anticipatory work.

Strong leadership buy-in. Public interest. Reinforced multi-level strategic foresight reputation and legitimacy. Flanders takes a spearhead role at the international level.

CAPABILITIES AND SKILLS

Capabilities and skills: Need for strategic foresight training to be put in place across the policymaking system. Need for dedicated resources (finances, time, new competences, incentives) for work with strategic foresight internally in the Government of Flanders and with external partners.

Promote access to databases and other knowledge platforms. Strategic foresight approaches are part of the toolset for (future) public servants. Regular training for public servants and policy makers. Shared exercises to apply strategic foresight (e.g. horizon scanning).

INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Institutional arrangements: Need for clarification of roles for the public administration to make clear the expectation to take multi-level strategic foresight and long-term policy challenges into account. Need for more deliberate engagement of the wider ecosystem (academia, third sector, citizens, civil society organisations, businesses etc.)

Dialogues, coalitions and networks across sectors/disciplines. Defined roles and responsibilities for foresight across/within organisations and sectors. Inclusive stakeholder engagement. Provision of enabling conditions for practitioners (time, resources, ownership).

EMBEDDEDNESS IN THE POLICY CYCLE

Embeddedness in the policy cycle: Need for guidelines put in place for the use of strategic foresight in policymaking. Need for clear connection between multi-level strategic foresight and policy priorities and long-term strategic planning.

Strategic foresight understandable to policy makers and actionable for their concrete needs. Foresight as an evolving instrument. Multi-level Strategic foresight advice integrated in decisions.

FEEDBACK AND LEARNING LOOPS

Need for more systematic and forward-looking development of the anticipatory intelligence system connected to resilient policymaking.

Monitoring activities and impact assessment of multi-level strategic foresight. Established feedback channels. Targeted communication and active dissemination. Promote sharing and networking initiatives and events.

PRACTICAL GUIDANCE

FOR STRATEGIC FORESIGHT
IN FLANDERS

WHAT IS THIS PRACTICAL GUIDANCE?

Ways to start doing Strategic Foresight

*Strategic Foresight can be adopted through an **incremental process** that **kick-starts its adoption and use** at the level of organisations and/or teams.*

*The Flanders Chancellery and Foreign Office has developed **four functions** to enable **organisations and/or teams** to engage in practice with Strategic Foresight. These functions answer to their challenges and needs and increase the quality in the design and delivery of their activities and outputs:*



WHAT IS THIS PRACTICAL GUIDANCE?

Ways to start doing Strategic Foresight



DISCOVER Trends and disruptions

- Trend analysis
- Weak signals
- Causal Layered Analysis



EXPLORE Anticipatory intelligence

- Horizon scanning
- Patterns & system analysis
- Science-to-Policy dialogues



MAP Opportunities & challenges

- Futures wheel
- Scenarios analysis
- Resilience indicators



CREATE Impact and scale

- Visions
- Roadmaps for action
- Coalitions for the future

HOW TO SEE FUTURES FROM A MULTI-LEVEL/ REGIONAL LEVEL?

Opportunities for a multi-level dialogue on futures

Flanders can play a leading role in the promotion of multi-level dialogues on futures, ensuring that the regional perspective is embedded in EU policymaking.

For that purpose, specific actions appear as especially relevant at this stage:



Shared scans

What are the signals that are emerging or profiling in the horizon for regions?



Scenario approaches

Which scenarios are possible, probable and desirable for regions?



Opportunity spotting

How can regions lever existing and potential opportunities to shape their futures?

*The Flanders Chancellery and Foreign Office started to promote these exchanges between regions. Under the title of “**Strategic Foresight for Resilience**”, the Flanders Chancellery and Foreign Office organized in 2023 collaborative sessions with representatives from 10 European regions.*

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT IN FLANDERS

Foundational elements, strategic drivers
and practical guidance

