How can foresight and horizon scanning better inform policy agendas?

2nd International Network for Government Science Advice Conference
Science and Policy Making: Towards a New Dialogue
Brussels, 29-30 September 2016

Fabiana Scapolo, PhD
Deputy Head of Unit Foresight, Behavioural Insights and Design for Policy
DG Joint Research Centre
European Commission

Flickr picture credits: Kevin Dooler
In 2008 six possible functions were identified:

1. Informing policy
2. Facilitating policy implementation
3. Embedding participation in policy-making
4. Supporting policy definition
5. Reconfiguring the policy system
6. Symbolic function

THE TRADITIONAL POLICY CYCLE AND COMPLEXITY

Civil Society

European Parliament

Member States/ Council

Business sector

Commission
ANTICIPATION (FORESIGHT?) IN THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

- A diversified experience dominated by scientific and technological dimensions
- A tendency towards modelling and quantitative methods
- A growing consensus on the need to engage with global complexity and contingencies using a wider set of anticipation tools for more effective and resilient policies

2014 Better regulation toolkit: "foresight and other forward looking tools complement quantitative modelling with a system thinking and long-term approach that is developed through qualitative and participatory methods involving all relevant stakeholders. They facilitate thinking out-of-the-box."
FORESIGHT IN THE JOINT RESEARCH CENTRE

- Long tradition (Institute for Prospective Technological studies, Future Oriented Technology Assessment Conferences)
- Focus on technology analysis and progressive shift towards quantitative modelling
- Recent revitalisation of foresight: addressing complexity through narratives
MORE THAN REPORTS: OPERATIONALISING FORESIGHT

- **SYNCHRONISATION:** align the timing of foresight projects with the European policy-making cycle
- **ENGAGEMENT:** ensure active participation of the right stakeholders
- **POLICY RELEVANCE:** co-design projects with policy DGs that can deliver insights to effectively support their specific policy initiatives
- **CROSS-POLICIES:** system thinking often requires working with more than one Commission service on a given project
- **DESIGN:** customise and combine methods and create new fit-for-purpose tools
- **CAPITALISE ON FORESIGHT KNOWLEDGE:** exploit the knowledge generated through foresight processes with policy makers and stakeholders through new tools and engagement processes
- **ANTICIPATORY CULTURE:** bring long-term non-linear thinking into the mindset of policy makers
PROJECT 1: FUTURE OF INDUSTRY

A new method for industrial policy at sectoral level

- Build on previously developed industrial landscape vision 2025 (ILV 2025)
- Platform for active engagement with industry (especially SMEs), European Industrial Associations, and other stakeholders
- Facilitation of a dialogue between the industrial sector and the European Commission (already implemented on two manufacturing sectors)
- Definition of an industrial policy agenda for the manufacturing sector
- Strong ownership from the sector on the vision
- Identification of new highlights, partial reorganisation or different take on existing knowledge
Future proofing the regulatory framework

- Identify possible future challenges for the EU food safety and nutrition
- Assess whether the current food policy and regulatory framework is able to deal with future challenges (contributing to REFIT - Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme)
- Identify research needs and develop policy recommendations on the basis of scenarios

The project is carried out together with DG SANTE.
NEW TOOLS 1: SERIOUS GAME TO EXPLORE SCENARIOS

Bringing scenarios to life

- A board game that takes players through plausible alternative futures to make them think and discuss systemically
- Brings the future close to participants' realities
- Already two editions of the game using scenarios from different foresight studies

Feedback

- Positive feedback from industry, NGOs and policy-makers
- 80% of players agree that the game helped them take a strategic and forward-looking perspective
- Strong elements of surprise and learning
- As in real life, the quality of the conversation depends on the type of participants
NEW TOOLS 2: FORESIGHT KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT TOOL

Towards quicker future-proofing

- Develop a repository of European relevant global trends that shape our society to foster systemic understanding and possible implications on policy issues
- Prototype and test new tools to support exploratory discussions engaging with European policy makers contributing to future-proof policies
- Strengthen the future literacy capacity across the Commission
Horizon scanning: detecting, analyse weak signals and emerging issues and their possible implications

Bridge quantitative and qualitative approaches

Engage beyond the network of usual experts towards more participatory foresight

Engage with Member States foresight capacities on EU policy related topics

Revisit our relation with the foresight community after the FTA conference series
We operate as the EU Policy Lab

- **Collaborative** and experimental space
- Applying **foresight, behavioural insights** and **design thinking**
- Explore, connect and **find solutions** for better policy-making
- Working directly for policy DGs

EU POLICY LAB

a collaborative and experimental space for innovative policy-making

THANK YOU!

fabiana.scapolo@ec.europa.eu
Visit our blog!
http://blogs.ec.europa.eu/eupolicylab/

Flickr picture credits: Kevin Dooler