

Abstract

Building Strategic Intelligence to Anticipate Global Challenges

There is a clear and growing need for the ability to anticipate change to be embedded in policy. This is critical not only to be able to respond and adapt to new situations before they occur, but also to shape the future, building upon mutual understanding and common visions to be jointly pursued. For policy responses to address current global challenges, especially when seen separately from one another, is clearly a demanding task and all the more so when the policy focus extends beyond the challenges facing societies today, seeking to anticipate future challenges and transform them into opportunities.

This is the rationale for a recent study by the Joint Research Centre, Institute for Prospective Technological Studies (JRC-IPTS). Building a comprehensive picture of the main identified trends and possible future disruptive global challenges, this study sought to examine how the EU could position itself in shaping a response to them.

Following a comprehensive synthesis of recent future oriented studies, a wide online expert consultation and subsequent quantitative analysis, a set of issues were identified and prioritised, based on the criteria of urgency, tractability and impact. Key issues were then presented and discussed in a workshop with selected experts and policy makers. These were then grouped into three challenges with a global scope, but which require action at EU level:

- The need to change current ways in which essential natural resources are used.
- The need to anticipate and adapt to societal changes.
- The need for more effective and transparent governance for the EU and the world.

The foresight approach employed in this study contributes to policy making by supporting a continuous and shared approach to understand the present in all its complexity, to look at different future possibilities and to shape a joint direction to follow, considering different stakeholders' points of view. Such an approach, linked to other forward-looking techniques and drawing on evidence-based research and quantitative elements, would be critical to enable policy making to become more adaptive and able to anticipate and address change.