

**GOVERNMENT
FORESIGHT
COMMUNITY**
ANNUAL MEETING
PARIS, OCTOBER 2019

Foreword

Remarks by OECD Secretary General Angel Gurría

We live in an increasingly complex, turbulent and uncertain world. I see the consequences of that every day. We are facing unprecedented shifts that challenge longstanding assumptions. In this context, it is more important than ever to prepare for the unexpected. This means exploring future developments, and using this insight to design appropriate responses today. The OECD is honoured to provide a forum where such ideas can be shared and thus, strengthen the entire Government Foresight Community.

The OECD is at the forefront of policy analysis and standard-setting in most areas of the economy and society. This is precisely why our Government Foresight Community is a key vehicle for building better policies for better lives. It is the ideal place to promote a collaborative platform for global foresight. By sharing our best ideas and our best practices, we can learn from each other and strengthen the quality and impact of our foresight work. Knowledge-sharing and information exchange is power. Together, we can expand and mainstream the practice of foresight globally, for our mutual benefit.

I encourage you to explore how we can better collaborate to reinforce each other's work. An exercise of cross-pollination from which we all stand to benefit, to enhance our ability to navigate today's dangerous waters; towards a brighter future.



Introduction

The OECD's Government Foresight Community brings together strategic foresight practitioners in the public sector from around the world. Its purpose is to strengthen foresight capacity in government and international organisations by drawing on collective experience and bringing the combined future insights to bear on key policy issues of our times.

This was the sixth annual meeting of the GFC, and included almost 100 participants representing 31 countries and organisations. For the first time, a group of experienced foresight practitioners from the private sector also participated on the first of the two days. Experts from within the OECD were also present, and held a session showcasing foresight and futures-relevant work in the Secretariat. Foresight practitioners from other international organisations also attended, representing the IMF, UNESCO, and the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie among others.

1. Exhibits of the future

During this highly interactive session, participants were invited to explore multiple plausible future disruptions and scenarios by visiting various pop-up ‘Exhibits of the Future’. Each exhibit invited visitors to ask a question about a plausible, fictional future beginning with “what if...”, and contributing signals, implications, and potential impacts for policy today. The OECD Secretary General also participated in this session, and interacted with a number of GFC contributors. Some examples of the pieces presented included:



- What if we all stop going out because everything is delivered digitally to our devices or physically to our doors?
- What if western societies are extremely polarised and democratic systems totally break down?
- What if global value chains split into regional blocs?
- What if the world's largest emerging market exists in a virtual world?
- What if municipalities in developing economies emerge as key actors in the fight against climate change?
- What if governments are attacked by AI?

2. The cutting edge of government and private foresight

To start a dialogue on public and private foresight, two keynote speakers – Jana Tapanainen from the public sector and Cécile Wendling from the private sector – shared examples of work they are undertaking, the motivation for their organisations to engage in foresight, ongoing exchanges with their peers, and some effective practices for making their work impactful. For its part, the OECD has prepared a short publication on [‘Strategic Foresight for Better Policies’](#), which outlines fundamental characteristics of effective foresight practice in governments, illustrated with examples from numerous GFC members. A plenary discussion followed, in which participants shared insights they had gained, as well as relevant experiences from their own organisations.

3. Public-private foresight exchange

During this participatory session, participants were invited to share ideas and initiatives that they would like to work on together. The contributions were then opened to breakout groups to discuss further.

4. Foresight work at the OECD

During this session, GFC members learned about and discussed a selection of the OECD’s recent foresight and future-related projects from a range of substantive Directorates. They also discussed plausible futures disruptions with experienced OECD experts. Project presented included:

- Data-driven revolution of insurance and social protection
- Smart drugs and cognitive super humans?
- Anticipatory innovation governance in the field of child policy
- Blockchain-enabled self-sovereign identity
- Crowd-sourced climate data
- Non-OECD countries as the main destinations for mid- and high- skilled migrants

5. Communicating foresight for policy impact

In a keynote talk, internationally renowned writer and scenarios expert Dr Betty Sue Flowers presented a wealth of knowledge and experience on how strategic foresight, and scenarios in particular, can be communicated through the power of storytelling. She highlighted the links between futures studies and the use of narratives – “the future is always and only a story” – to demonstrate how a person or organisation’s perspective on the future determines thinking and action in the present. She highlighted the power of mythologies in our cultures and societies – and how they are evoked to serve particular agendas.

6. Presentations and demonstrations by GFC members

During this session, GFC members presented and demonstrated workshop techniques, foresight methodologies, effective practices, and content from recent projects. Below are titles of their sessions.

- **European Commission:** 100 radical innovation breakthroughs for the future
- **IMF:** Overhauling the International Monetary Fund’s approach to country surveillance
- **European Commission:** Foresight at The European Commission’s Science and Knowledge Service
- **European Parliament:** Stress Testing a Strategic Foresight Report
- **Project on Foresight and Democracy**
- **German Environment Agency:** Systemic Analysis to support (environmental) policy
- **European Environmental Agency:** Emerging Trends of Relevance for Environment: Four Examples Related to Technological Innovation
- **Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs:** Bridging the Gap Between Policy and Strategy
- **International Civil Society Centre:** Scanning the Horizon: International Civil Society Futures Community
- **Policy Horizons Canada:** Next digital economy
- **Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency:** Applying Mixed Method Approaches for Building And Using Scenarios
- **Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), Germany:** New Foresight Process and Study on the “Future of Values”
- **European Parliamentary Research Service:** Trustworthy Foresight for Policy
- **European Polar Board:** Flexible Governance for a Changing Time
- **Armasuisse:** Transition Game
- **Prime Minister’s Office, Singapore:** Driving Forces 2035
- **School of International Futures:** Intergenerational Fairness
- **NISTEP Japan:** The 11th Foresight in Japan: Preliminary Results, Insights, and Methodological Challenges

7. The future of governmental foresight

In the concluding session of this year’s GFC meeting, participants were invited to consider the bold objective “all governments and societies engage sufficiently in exploring alternative plausible futures in order to improve policies and achieve well-being.” Major obstacles to achieving this are lack of awareness about the need for foresight; and lack of access to user-friendly foresight products, tools, guides, and training. A much larger scale of effort is required globally on strategic foresight, and that requires imagining the bold, game-changing actions that would be required so that we can continue to work towards them.

Conclusion

Participants welcomed what they generally perceived as an upswing in interest in and demand for strategic foresight at this time when it is so greatly needed. The GFC continues to serve as a forum for exchange of effective practices, and the OECD looks forward to inviting members back to the next meeting in 2020. More information can be found on the [OECD Strategic Foresight website](#).