

Anticipating Europe

Foresight and the next generation of EU reporting

Day 1 — At the Centre for Future Generations (Brussels)

Norrskén House, Rue du Commerce 72, 1040 Brussels · cfg.eu

Arrival and quick working lunch 12:30–13:15

Registration, networking, and a brief scene-set of the two days. (45 min)

Introduction to foresight 13:15–13:45

Introduction to foresight vocabulary. Foresight explores plausible futures rather than predicting them; its main tools are horizon scanning, scenarios and stress-testing. Introduction to the different methods of scenario generation.

Combining weak signals. Participants answer one prompt: what is one thing in your field that nobody is talking about yet? Signals shared round the room, then a quick pairing, combine yours with another, to sense how signals build a picture of several possible futures rather than one forecast.

Reporting on foresight and futures, part one 13:45–15:15

Orientation: how the EU uses foresight. A short map of the landscape they will walk into tomorrow, the Parliament and STOA, the Commission, the EU Policy Lab and JRC, the strategic foresight reports and cycle. Framed as "what to expect," deliberately light so it does not duplicate the institutions' own sessions on Day 2.

EU foresight over time. The EU foresight story: the Parliament's Global Trends Unit (2015) and the Global Trendometer (until 2019), the unit renamed rather than closed (now the Policy Foresight Unit); ESPAS and Global Trends to 2030, still running with a 2024 report; the Commission's annual Strategic Foresight Report since 2020, and scenario-testing built in from 2026. Participants consider whether the evolution is a decline, maturation or change in form and write a provisional list of questions they would put to the EU on Day 2.

The reporting craft. What to keep in mind when covering forward-looking outputs so they are not flattened into the generic trope: holding uncertainty without hype or false prediction, spelling out the key tensions, widening the cast of actors beyond the usual few, and distinguishing a real signal from hype.

Coffee break 15:15–15:30

Reporting on foresight and futures, part two 15:30–17:15

Interrogating a foresight product. Small groups pressure-test foresight products: does it feed real decisions or sit on a shelf? What are its assumptions, and who is missing from them? How is it resourced, and by whom? Who authored it, with what mandate?

Hands-on task. In small groups, take a real EU forward-looking output and either draft an original angle on it or list the reporting pitfalls it invites. Short share-back

Closing round and bridge to day two 17:15–17:30

Opportunity to check in at the hotel.

Network evening 19:00

Day 2 — At the European Parliament (Brussels)

Note: The schedule for Day 2 is still being finalised. This concerns both the sessions with MEPs — who may each be given a separate slot — and the sessions with foresight experts, which may involve different EP units as well as different staff members.

Welcome 9:00–9:15

Welcome to the Parliament and framing of the day.

Political framing 9:15–10:00

Two MEPs from the STOA Panel – Thomas Pellerin-Carlin (S&D, confirmed); Jana Toom (Renew, requested), Andrea Wechsler (EPP, requested) and/or Nicolás González Casares (S&D, requested) on why foresight matters to legislators now, and candidly, where it sits on the political agenda today. (45 min)

Policy foresight in practice 10:00–11:00

A senior expert from one of the responsible units on how the Parliament does foresight: the methods, the tools, and an honest account of how the work is resourced and used now compared with its mid-2010s peak. (1 hr)

Coffee break 11:00–11:15

(15 min)

The science–media–policy interface 11:15–12:15

The European Science-Media Hub (ESMH), ideally Coordinator Svetla Tanova-Encke, on how journalists can plug into Parliament's foresight and science-advice work, and where reliable material and contacts can be found. (1 hr)

Lunch 12:15–13:15

(1 hr)

Foresight in practice: one project, start to finish 13:15–14:15

A senior expert from one of the responsible units walks the group through a single real scenario study — e.g. ETS II in 2035 (current versus postponed implementation), or a US return to the Paris Agreement in 2029 — from the triggering question to the finished scenarios, and candidly through what the work did (or didn't) influence afterwards. Extended, journalist-led Q&A, drawing on the critical questions developed on Day 1. (1 hr)

Wrap-up and takeaways 14:15–15:00

Pulling the two days together: what the journalists saw behind the scenes versus the method they learned on Day 1, the contacts and sources worth keeping, and how to report on EU foresight with the right mix of engagement and scepticism. Open discussion and close. (45 min)

End 15:00

Buffer to 15:30 if discussion runs.

Practical note

Parliament access. Entry requires advance accreditation and a security check on arrival, so build in badge pickup from around 8:30 even though the programme starts at 9:00.