Building a foresight hub in support of environmental policy in Europe

By Ana Jesus

European Environment Agency

1 June 2021, Global Foresight Summit

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Outline

- Unprecedented challenges

- How is the EU policy agenda responding?

- How can foresight help us move towards the future we want?

- EEA and Eionet at a glance

- EEA-Eionet foresight journey

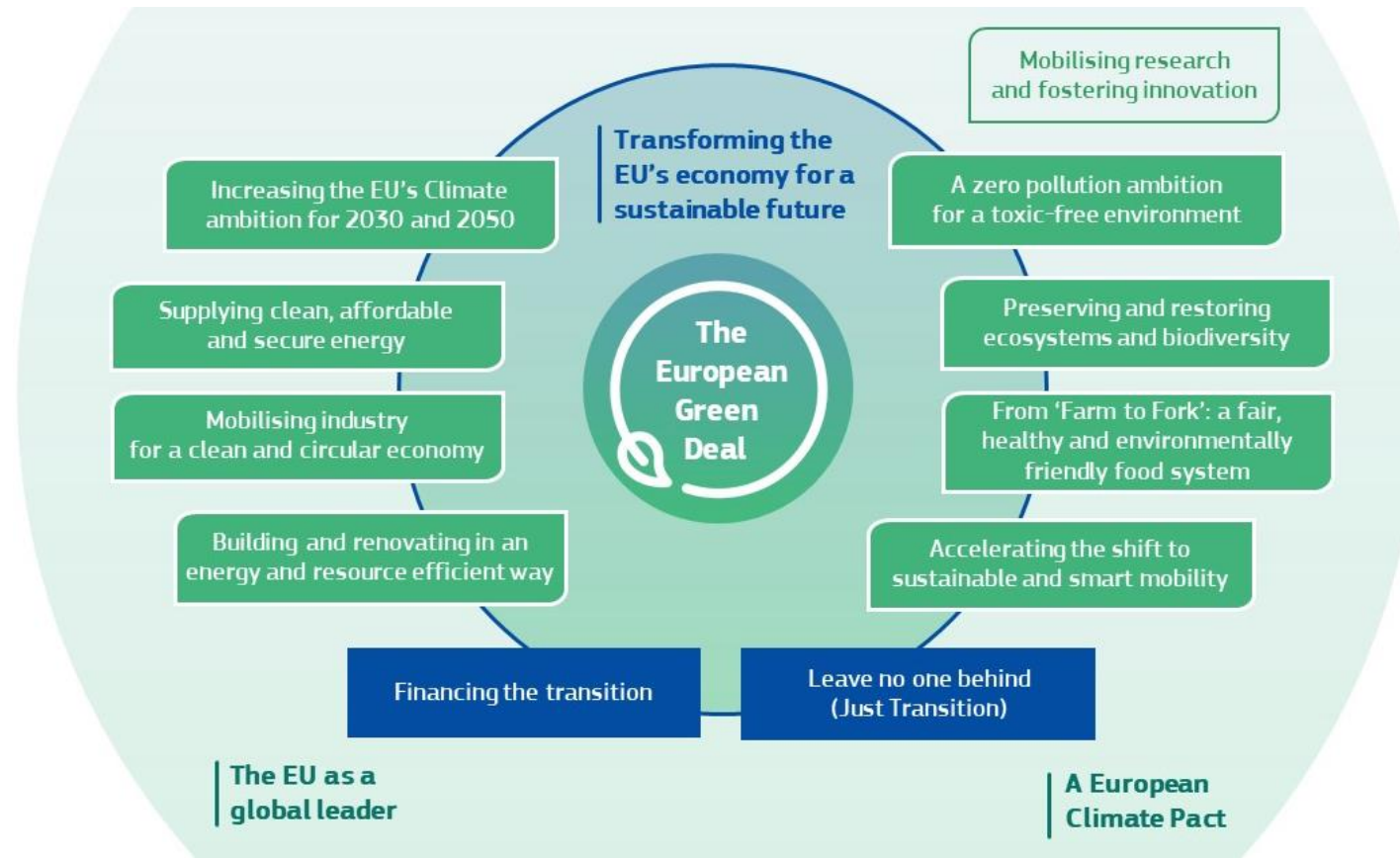- EEA-Eionet a foresight hub in support of environmental policy in Europe

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Global context: unprecedented challenges

- Europe faces environmental challenges of huge scale and urgency

- Achieving EU's 2050 goal of 'living well within planetary boundaries' requires policies, investments and knowledge to transform core systems of production and consumption

- The context is one of **urgency, uncertainty and complexity**

The question is no longer why or whether sustainability transitions are necessary, but **HOW** to make them happen at unprecedented speed!

The European environment — state and outlook 2020
Knowledge for transition to a sustainable Europe

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Theme	Past trends and outlook	
	Past trends (10-15 years)	Outlook to 2030
Protecting, conserving and enhancing natural capital		
Terrestrial protected areas		
Marine protected areas		
EU protected species and habitats		
Common species (birds and butterflies)		
Ecosystem condition and services		
Water ecosystems and wetlands		
Hydromorphological pressures		
State of marine ecosystems and biodiversity		
Pressures and impacts on marine ecosystems		
Urbanisation and land use by agriculture and forestry		
Soil condition		
Air pollution and impacts on ecosystems		
Chemical pollution and impacts on ecosystems		
Climate change and impacts on ecosystems		

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An ambitious, transformative EU policy agenda

- The European Green Deal puts the need for transformative change at the heart of EU policy

- It promotes the transformation of key systems (food, energy, mobility, buildings), as well as cross-cutting objectives, e.g.

  – no net emissions of greenhouse gases in 2050

  – decoupling of economic growth from resource use

  – protecting, conserving & enhancing EU's natural capital

  – ensuring a just transition

The role of foresight

- Transforming societal systems is a major **governance challenge** → system innovation is complex and uncertain, characterised by risks, unintended outcomes and trade-offs

- **Foresight can play an important role in helping society define and move towards desired futures**, e.g. using participatory processes to explore futures, pathways, risks and opportunities for policy and action

- The current European Commission sees foresight as a **key tool to support EU's transformative agenda and ensure short-term initiatives are grounded in a longer-term perspective**

- New Vice-President for Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight and publication of annual Strategic Foresight Reports

2020 Strategic Foresight Report
CHARTING THE COURSE TOWARDS
A MORE RESILIENT EUROPE

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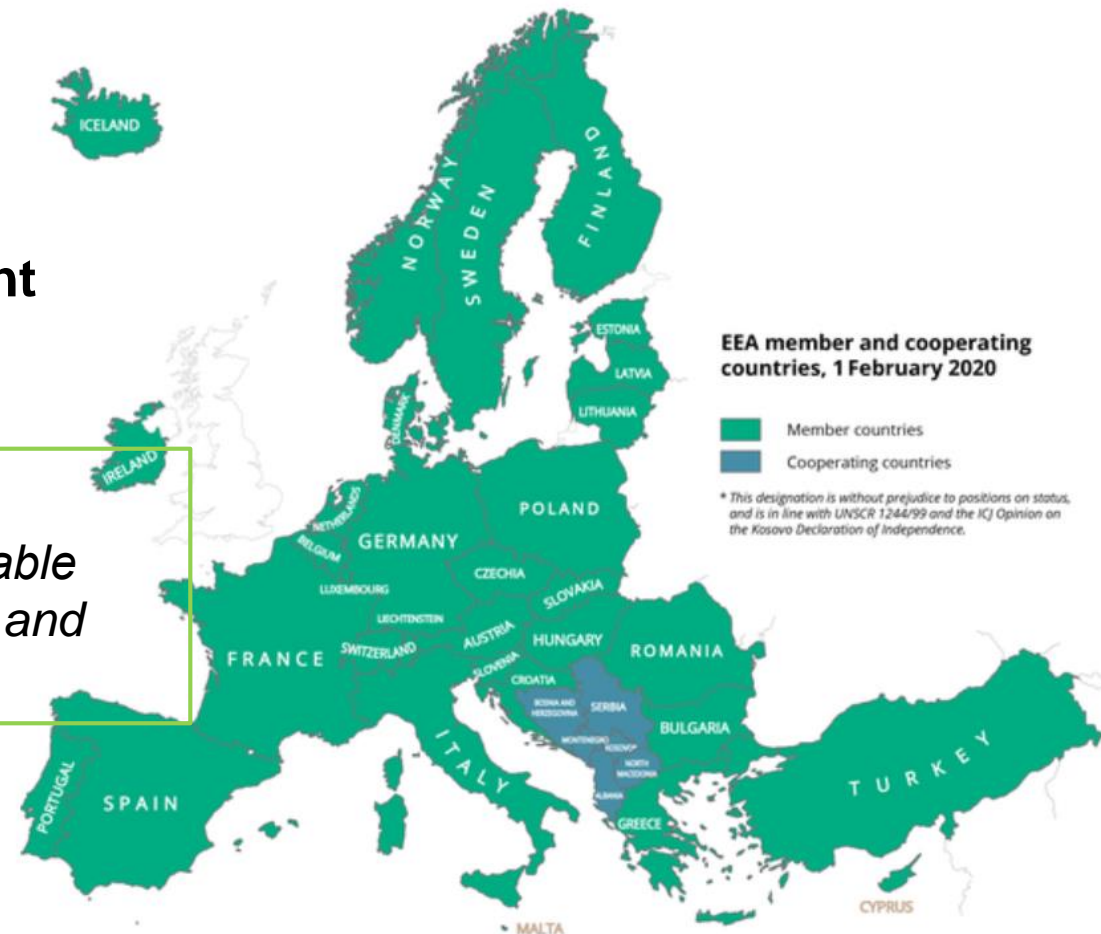
EEA & Eionet at a glance

- **European Environment Agency (EEA):** EU agency that generates knowledge to support policymaking and governance

- The EEA works closely with 'Eionet' – its network of 38 member and cooperating countries

The Eionet covers various topics, including **foresight**

EEA-Eionet vision for 2030

"Enable a sustainable Europe through trusted and actionable knowledge for informed decision-making on environment and climate priorities and solutions"

EEA member and cooperating countries, 1 February 2020

- Member countries
- Cooperating countries

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/99 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

The Eionet foresight network

- EU network of foresight experts from national environment ministries and agencies across 38 EEA member and cooperating countries

- Established in 2008 and coordinated by the EEA

- Distinctive environmental focus
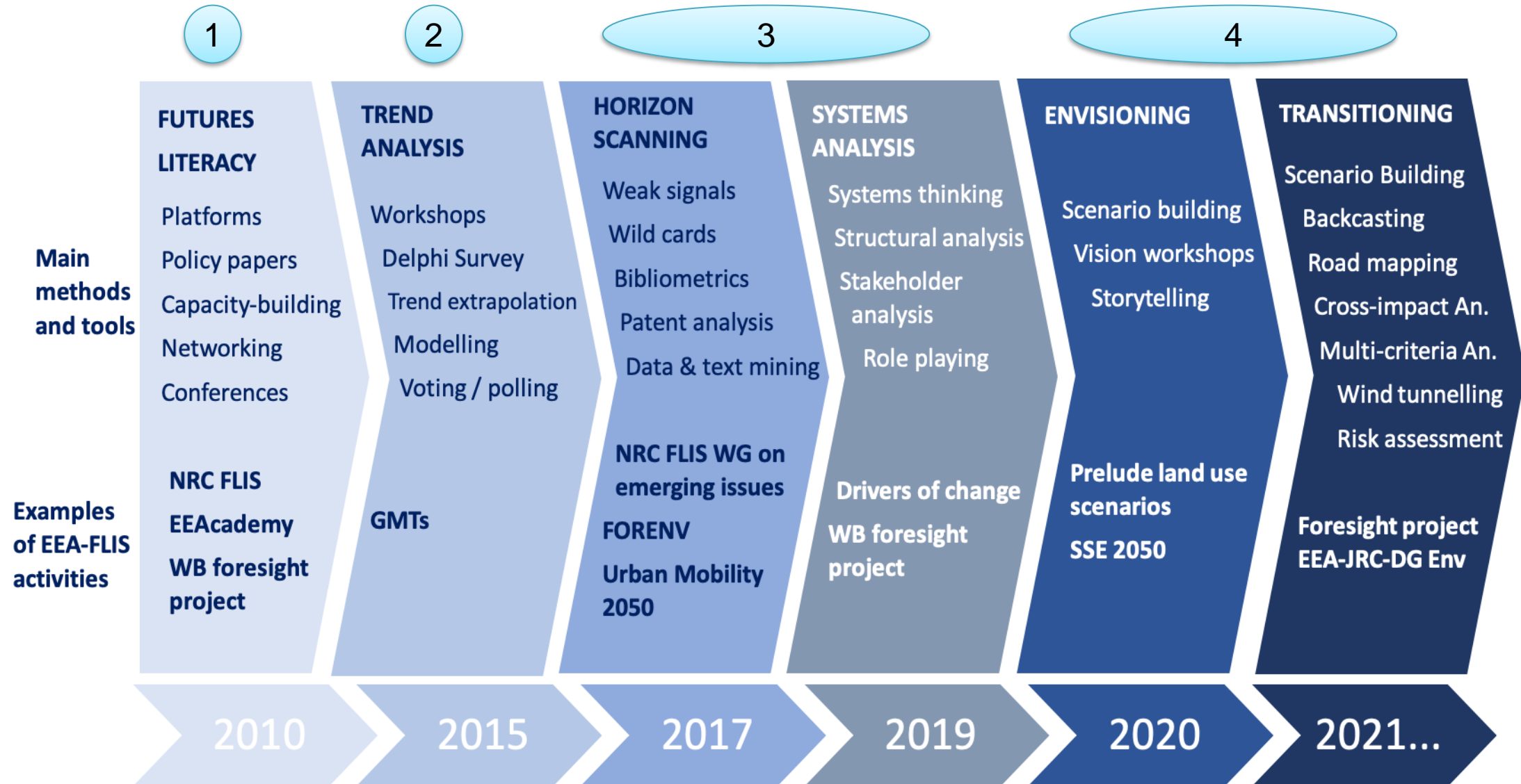
- Link between the national and EU scale

Aims
- Promote knowledge sharing and capacity building on foresight
- Promote the use of forward-looking information in state of environment reporting
- Co-create knowledge and products to inform policymaking at national and EU level
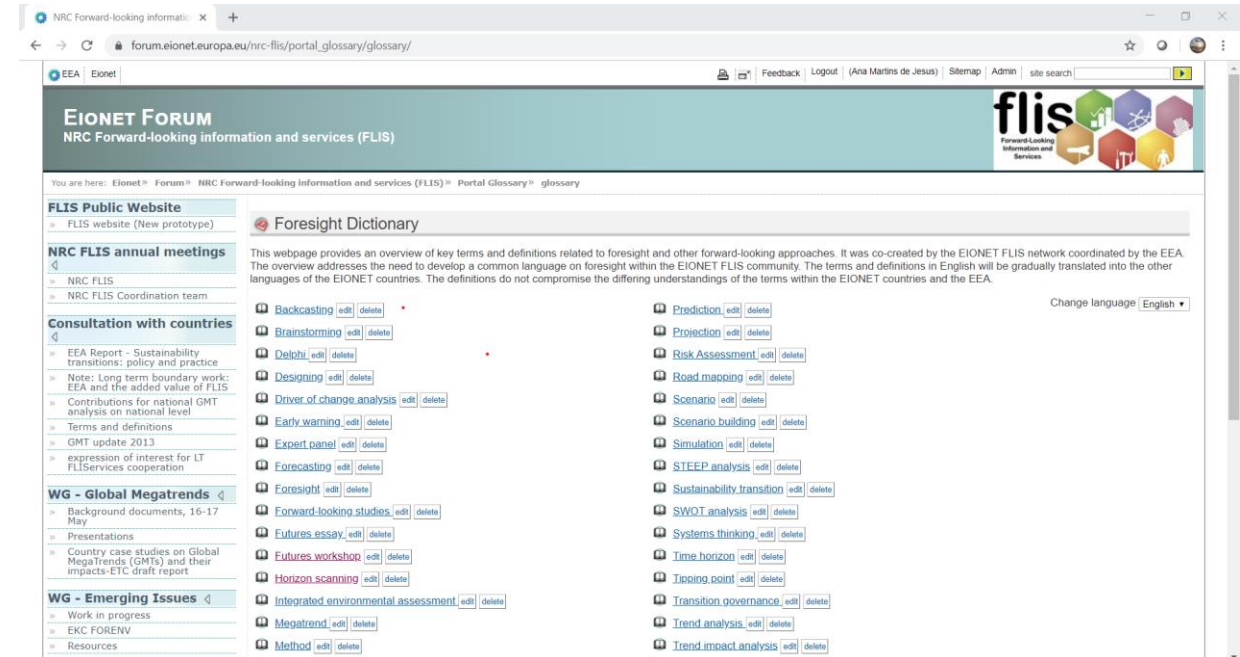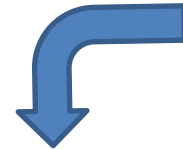
Expertise
- Horizon scanning
- System analysis
- Scenarios and visioning
- Sustainability assessments

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The EEA-Eionet foresight journey

1. Building foresight literacy

- Foresight dictionary (2016)

1. Building foresight literacy

- Knowledge sharing around national projects, good practices and country perspectives
  - Newsletter
  - Webinars, e.g.
    - Social media for change: how to create a community of change makers?
    - The future of meat: from trend analysis to policy action

- Training courses, e.g.
  - System thinking in environmental policy
  - Using scenarios for transition governance
  - Horizon scanning masterclass

- Network annual meetings

- Expert meetings

- Collaboration with other networks, e.g. OECD's Government Foresight Community

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2. Global megatrends & drivers of change

- GMT assessments have been integral to EEA's state of the European environment reports, providing a global context for thinking about trends and outlooks (>2010)

- Method toolkit for understanding the implications of GMT at the national level (2017)

- Country case-studies on global megatrends and their impacts (2018)

- Assessment of drivers of change of relevance to the environment (2020)

THE EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT
STATE AND OUTLOOK 2010
ASSESSMENT OF GLOBAL MEGATRENDS

THE EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT
STATE AND OUTLOOK 2015
ASSESSMENT OF GLOBAL MEGATRENDS

Eionet report | No 1/2017
Mapping Europe's environmental future: understanding the impacts of global megatrends at the national level
Method tool kit

EEA Report | No 25/2019
Drivers of change of relevance for Europe's environment and sustainability

TABLE 0.2 Studies on implications of global megatrends at the national/regional scale and their thematic focus

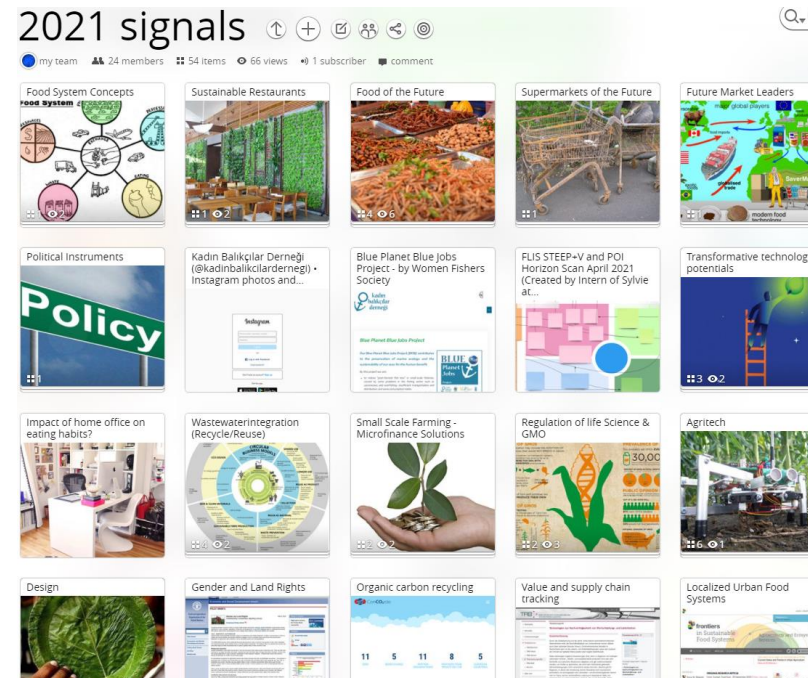| EEA global megatrends		Environment						Resources	Environment and society			Frequency (%)
		Switzerland (FOEN, 2016)	Hungary (MA, 2017)	Slovenia (SEA, 2018)	Flanders (BE) (Flemish Environment Agency, 2014)	Slovakia (Slovak Environment Agency et al., 2016)	Sweden (Naturvårdsverket, 2014)	Western Balkans (ETC/ICM, 2018)	Northern Europe (*) (Naturvårdsverket, 2014)	Finland (Vationeuvoston kanslia, 2017)	United Kingdom (DEFRA, 2017)	Netherlands (PBL, 2013)	
Social	Diverging global population trends	×	×		×	×	×		×	×	×	×	82
	Towards a more urban world	×	×		×	×			×	×	×	×	82
	Changing disease burdens and risks of pandemics		×		×	×				×		×	55
Technological	Accelerating technological change			×	×	×			×	×	×		64
Economic	Continued economic growth?	×	×		×	×			×	×	×	×	82
	An increasingly multipolar world				×	×			×	×	×		55
	Intensified global competition for resources			×	×	×	×		×		×		64
Environmental	Growing pressures on ecosystems	×	×		×	×		×		×		×	73
	Increasingly severe consequences of climate change	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	100
	Increasing environmental pollution	×	×		×	×	×		×	×	×		82
Political	Diversifying approaches to governance				×	×				×		×	55

3. Horizon scanning

- Weak-signal collection in Pearltrees (>2017)

- Guidebook development: 2018 & 2021

- Projects, e.g.:

  – Rapid assessment of emerging trends on artificial meat, blockchain, delivery drones and synthetic biology (2019)

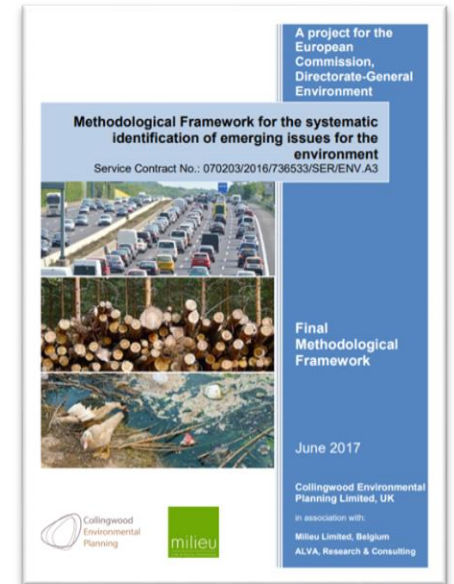 – Reimagining the Food System: scanning the horizon for emerging social innovations (2021)
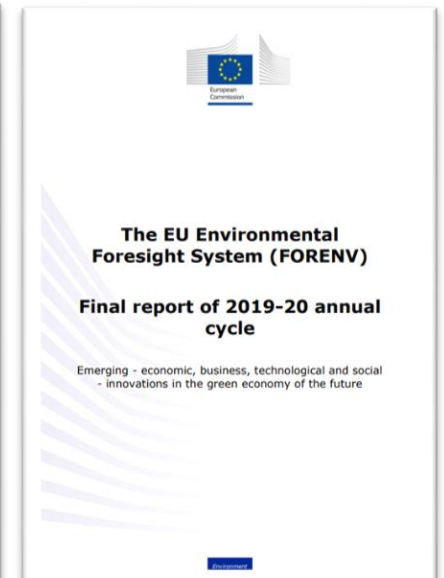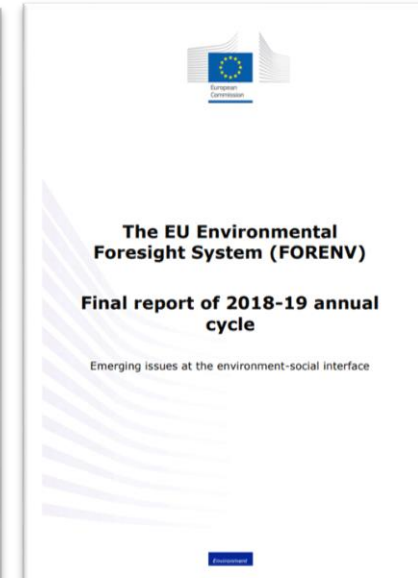
3. Horizon scanning

- Contributions to FORENV - the EU foresight system for the systematic identification of emerging environmental issues (>2017)

  – Method development

  – Scan for weak signals (link to national scans)

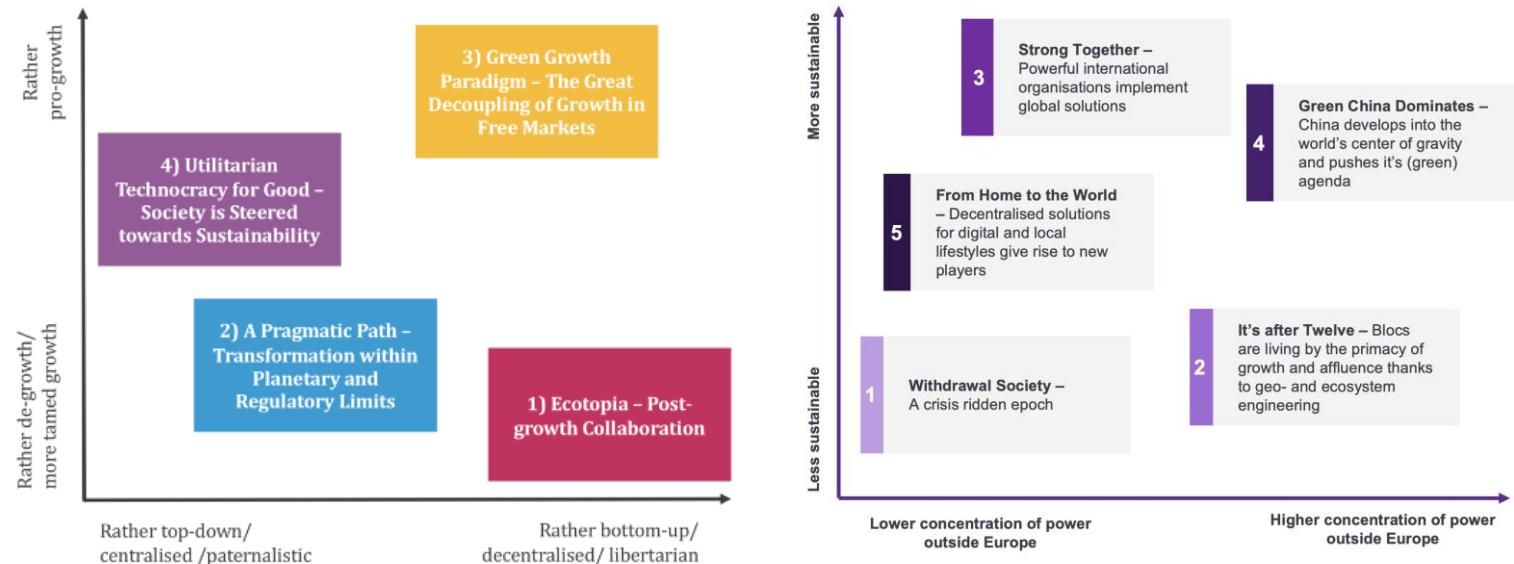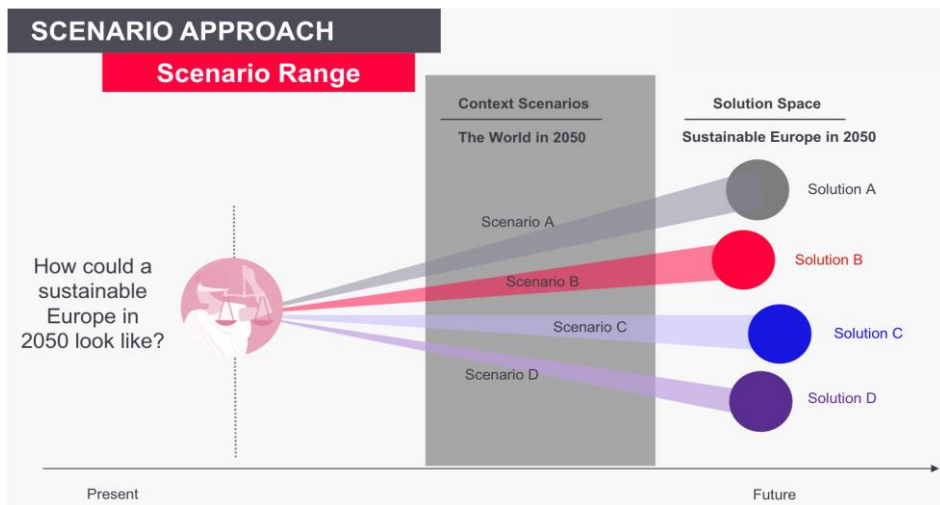 – Participation in sense-making workshops

A project for the European Commission, Directorate-General Environment

Methodological Framework for the systematic identification of emerging issues for the environment
Service Contract No.: 070203/2016/736533/SER/ENV.A3

Final Methodological Framework

June 2017

Collingwood Environmental Planning Limited, UK

in association with:
Milieu Limited, Belgium
ALVA, Research & Consulting

FORENV - EU FORESIGHT SYSTEM FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

EARLY SIGNALS OF CHANGE

Step 1 - Information collection — ENV, JRC, RTD EEA/Eionet
Step 2 - Sense making — ENV, JRC, EEA, Experts
Step 3 - Characterisation — Secretariat, Experts
Step 4 - Validation — SCHEER and/or EEA SC
Step 5 - Outputs — Secretariat

EMERGING ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

FORENV — The EU environmental foresight system Pilot 2017-18

Emerging environmental issues in the field of new technologies in the urban environment

The EU Environmental Foresight System (FORENV)

Final report of 2018-19 annual cycle

Emerging issues at the environment-social interface

The EU Environmental Foresight System (FORENV)

Final report of 2019-20 annual cycle

Emerging - economic, business, technological and social - innovations in the green economy of the future

- Scenarios for a Sustainable Europe in 2050:

  – Development of raw normative scenarios and global context scenarios, based on plausible, imaginative descriptions of possible futures (2020)

  – Scenario enrichment (2021)

  – Use solution scenarios to explore what sustainable core production and consumption systems (i.e. food, energy and mobility) could look like in 2050 & how we might get there (>2021)

EEA-Eionet: a foresight hub

…in support of environmental policy in Europe

- Distinctive **environmental focus**

- **Strengthening of national foresight** knowledge & practices across Europe

- **Co-development** of methods & tools

- Feeding national expertise, perspectives and outputs into **EU policy processes** and vice-versa (important EU - country link)

- **Incorporating** foresight in integrated environment assessments and transition thinking to develop solutions-oriented and co-created knowledge in support of national and EU policy

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Thank you!

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