



ZERO POLLUTION TALKS



Flash report: "Zero Pollution and Foresight: building a Zero Pollution future" - Zero Pollution Talk 11 July

On 11 July 2023, the Zero Pollution Stakeholder Platform (ZPSP) hosted the second in a series of Zero Pollution Talks on "Zero Pollution and Foresight: building a Zero Pollution future", focusing on foresight in EU policymaking and how it can help develop possible transition pathways, prepare the EU to withstand shocks, and inform policies for a Zero Pollution future.

The meeting opened with remarks from the co-moderators **Joachim D'Eugenio**, Policy Adviser for Zero Pollution, European Commission and **Giustino Piccolo**, Policy Officer at the Committee of the Regions.

Joachim D'Eugenio, Policy Adviser for Zero Pollution, European Commission, said: *"Foresight is the discipline of exploring, anticipating and shaping the future by using collective intelligence in a structured manner. It is not about predicting the future, but rather about helping us understand and shape the future we desire."*

Upon presenting the Committee of the Regions role in Zero Pollution and Foresight context, **Giustino Piccolo**, Policy Officer at the Committee of the Regions, added: *"With Green Deal Going Local, our mission is to empower local and regional authorities, ensuring their voices shape the Green Deal and drive real on-the-ground change. By harnessing the power of foresight, we can navigate the shifting landscape and tackle the multitude of crises we face. Through inclusive discussions and shared understanding, we pave the way towards a Green Deal 2.0 for a resilient European Union as we approach the shift of the European mandate."*

In his opening statement **Grzegorz Drozd**, Team Leader for Strategic Foresight at Secretariat General of the European Commission, said: *"The accelerating pace of change brings forth various megatrends that profoundly impact society, the economy, and every aspect of our lives. As policymakers, it is imperative for us to explore innovative approaches to timely and efficiently respond to these transformations. The unprecedented events of COVID-19 or Russian military aggression against Ukraine have further underscored the urgency to future-proof our policies, enhancing their resilience and readiness to confront whatever challenges the future may hold"*. He also briefly presented the role of Strategic Foresight in EU policymaking, highlighted its relevance in the view of the Better Regulation Agenda, and brought forward the most recently published illustrative outcome of Strategic Foresight in practice - the [Strategic Foresight Report 2023](#).

Owen White, co-author EU Environmental Foresight (FORENV) Report, and Managing Consultant, Enomia Research and Consulting added: *"The [FORENV synthesis report on 'Delivering a Zero Pollution ambition by 2050'](#) has allowed us to provide genuine insights into anticipating issues that necessitate policy responses in the pursuit of achieving Zero Pollution. Strategic Foresight and participatory foresight serve as essential tools for policymakers, enabling the identification of specific issues while fostering critical thinking,*



dialogue, and the inclusion of diverse perspectives. By bringing together individuals from different policy perspectives and areas of expertise, these tools provide a creative space for collaboration. Foresight exercises inherently require selectivity as they explore various possibilities through horizon scanning, with a specific focus on revealing plausible futures. The process of engaging in foresight exercises is as important as the outcomes they produce."

Maciej Krzysztofowicz, Policy Analyst, Competence Centre on Foresight, Joint Research Centre of the European Commission said: "The aim of these structured processes at our disposal, as described in the foresight chapter of the [Zero Pollution Outlook](#), is to bring together different expertise to collectively think about potential, plausible, and even less likely futures. As the future serves as a common space of reflection, it liberates us from current problems in discussions and unifies our minds towards a common goal and shared thinking, fostering diverse ways of collaborating. Our focus centres on the imaginative world and the transition fuelled by imagination. It is important to start thinking ahead and anticipate future possibilities, while simultaneously developing our understanding and creating the necessary tools to confront them."

Ana Jesus, Integrated Environment Assessment Expert, European Environment Agency complemented the statements by adding: "Policymakers and the public play a crucial role in achieving Europe's environment and climate goals. Understanding sustainability challenges and responses from a systemic and forward-looking perspective is essential in this endeavour. Foresight can assist us in exploring alternative futures and generating anticipatory knowledge for policy action, considering the interconnectedness of pollution, climate change, and biodiversity loss with other social and economic challenges." She also presented the work of the EEA in the context of foresight for Zero Pollution including [Zero Pollution monitoring assessment](#) as well as [Scenarios for a sustainable Europe in 2050](#) and noted of anticipated continuous work in the area to generate forward-looking knowledge that can inform the EU policy debate and policy developments beyond 2030 and 2050 targets.

The speakers also emphasised the importance of recognising that foresight cannot be entirely objective, as the future is yet to unfold. The discussions also centred on the necessity to embrace diverse scenarios and outcomes without biased attitudes. Additionally, the significance of effective communication in the presentation of projections, considering their potential utilisation for political purposes, was highlighted. Foresight is a starting point for ongoing discussions rather than a destination, serving as a tool to envision potential pathways and future possibilities. Understanding the interconnectedness between different policy areas and exploring the trade-offs and synergies to establish systemic policy coherence is key.

Finally, the discussion concluded with the acknowledgement that building a Zero Pollution future requires increased attention on financing, regulations, behaviour change, and altering production patterns. Zero Pollution represents an ambitious goal, and foresight can contribute to realising this aspirational dimension. Achieving Zero Pollution goals involves identifying and addressing trade-offs and synergies. The importance of adopting a systemic view and recognising the diverse realities on the ground across Member States is also key in this process.

Find out more about the event [here](#) and learn more about the Zero Pollution Talks initiative, as well as access the session recording [here](#).