

EPRS online policy roundtable on Stress-testing EU policies
2 February 2022 | 13.00 - 15.00 hours

Joakim Strand, Chairman of the Committee for the Future, Parliament of Finland:

Reflections from the national perspective, including parliamentary engagement in future-proofing policies

Ladies and gentlemen,

In Finland, we truly honour the work you do in the European Parliamentary Research Service, and as the Chairman of the Committee for the Future, I am very happy to have the opportunity to offer the Finnish perspective on today's topic.

In Finland, we have several institutions that support the overall resilience of society. If stress testing is implemented in the Finnish context, the capabilities of these institutions are a good starting point. First of all, there is the normal process of preparing, reviewing, implementing and evaluating legislation and, regarding this, the Committee for the Future has already recommended phenomenon-based, cross-sectoral approaches and the use of foresight knowledge in the preparation of legislative initiatives.

Second, there are organisations that prepare for and seek to prevent any possible problem situations. The National Cyber Security Centre and The National Emergency Supply Agency are examples of relevant stakeholders.

Third, there is the Finnish foresight ecosystem. Foresight is not only done by the Ministries and the Parliament but also by government agencies, regional councils, municipalities, associations, citizens, businesses and academia. This network is coordinated by the Government Foresight Group and hosted by the Prime Minister's Office. This foresight community could and should be used more by the law drafting Ministries.

In this ecosystem, the role of the Committee for the Future is to identify arising developments early enough to where they can be taken into account in Finnish policymaking.

The Committee for the Future has also emphasised the spreading of future competencies both horizontally across government as well as vertically from the citizens to the EU level. The strategic foresight activities of the EU should empower members rather than give them future visions from above. The development of the stress-testing tool is a good step into this empowering direction. The Committee for the Future comes the closest to real stress testing when it performs its most important responsibility: the future-proofing of the Finnish Government Report on the Future and Agenda 2030 Report.

And now we come to the final point of my talk.

Future-proofing requires institutional support and political commitment to succeed. During the past ten years, multiple foresight actors have raised red flags on many of the issues that are challenging us today. Yet this knowledge has not been sufficiently processed by the decision-making systems. For decades, there has also been talk about the future impacts of emerging technologies, but we often forget that the technology to solve the climate crisis is already here, for example, and so we just need to implement it on a system level.

Too little focus is put on making Europe the best platform for world leading companies to grow. If we take the development of artificial intelligence in the future health care sector as an example, I am afraid that we will regulate and legislate this in a way that prevents many of these solutions and innovations from being utilised that would radically help people.

We need new foresight methods, such as stress testing, in order to create better laws. But we also need decision-makers with a *tasked responsibility* to challenge the obvious, think in the long term and look beyond the immediate threats and opportunities to the emerging ones. The strength of an institutionalised actor, such as the Committee for the Future, is to do this.

With this in mind, I would like to leave you with a question: Could the EU Parliament establish its own Committee for the Future — a political body tasked with advocating the long-term perspective in EU matters?

It would strengthen Europe in numerous ways, and we certainly all agree that the world of today would widely benefit from a much stronger European Union.

Thank you!