Capacity building for innovation in regional development

Cultivating futures literacy in regional development agencies

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Cultivating futures literacy in regional development agencies

This capacity building report was prepared by Katerina Ciampi Stancova, Policy Officer at the Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities, OECD Trento Centre for Local Development. The proceedings provide a summary of the foresight capacity building activities carried out during the second edition of the OECD-EURADA Winter School for regional development agencies. The Winter School was held in Utrecht, the Netherlands, from 26 to 29 February 2024. The theme of the 2024 edition was "Navigating the Future of Regional Development", and it was organised in cooperation with EURADA, the Association of Development Agencies and two Dutch development agencies: ROM Utrecht and Oost Netherlands. The residential part of the Winter School was preceded by two online workshops on "Cultivating Forward-Thinking and Futures Literacy in Regional Development Agencies"'. Forty participants from nineteen countries with diverse professional, cultural, gender and age backgrounds took part in the workshops. The diversity, inclusiveness, and engaging participatory approaches adopted throughout the workshops ensured an enriching and stimulating experience for all participants.

SCAN TO ACCESS THE PROJECT

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Table of contents

Figures

Executive summary

In today's rapidly changing world, regional development agencies (RDAs) have an important role to play in shaping the future of their regions. The ability to anticipate emerging trends and prepare for different possible futures is crucial. The OECD Trento Centre is actively working to improve the skills and capabilities of RDAs' staff so that they can successfully design and implement future-proof strategies and programmes.

A number of arguments, detailed throughout this report, make a compelling case for integrating foresight into the strategic planning of RDAs and can be summarised as follows:

- Be a visionary institution that stays ahead and is prepared for future challenges and opportunities.
- Be able to imagine and prepare for different possible futures.
- Think critically about the future role of RDAs in medium and long-term (vision, relevance, impact, services, role in the innovation ecosystem).
- Understand the long-term implications of the decisions.
- Contribute to guiding visions and aspirations of the region, e.g. be part of a regional strategy team.
- Use inclusive foresight to make local stakeholders and partners feel relevant and involved in the innovation processes.
- Identify and understand the future needs and preferences of current and potential customers.
- Raise awareness of futures-driven innovation.
- Integrate foresight into a Smart Specialisation and other STI strategies.
- Use foresight to imagine and design a decentralisation processes and multi-level governance.

To be effective, however, RDA staff should be able to identify and analyse signals of change, trends and megatrends, be proficient in foresight techniques and have sufficient skills in scenario development and scenario monitoring.

Surveys conducted with RDAs representatives suggest that many professionals possess limited understanding of foresight. There is therefore a need to cultivate futures literacy and provide training in foresight methods, tools, critical thinking, and creative approaches to long-term strategic planning.

Through active participation in the workshops, participants learned about foresight, its application and methods. They also gained a better understanding of how to imagine multiple future scenarios, considering different variables, trends and uncertainties that may affect their regions. A significant amount of time was devoted to foresight exercises on the topic of "Futures of Regional Development Agencies in 2050", which allowed participants to try out specific framing, scanning and visioning techniques.

SECTION I. INTRODUCTION

The OECD highlights the importance of exploring different future scenarios in regional policymaking and integrating strategic foresight into regional planning. According to the OECD's Regional Outlook 2023, enhancing foresight and anticipation competencies is crucial. This recommendation is grounded in the recognition that regional and local governments are often on the front lines of addressing complex and rapidly evolving challenges, such as climate change, economic shifts, and technological advancements.

Regional development agencies (RDAs) find themselves tasked with navigating these challenges alongside the local policymakers. Are they prepared effectively for changes? Are they ready to attain these unpreceded challenges, uncertainties and opportunities?

The application of foresight in the local context is still quite limited, mainly because local actors have only partial knowledge of foresight methodologies. Furthermore, day-to-day operations take up most of their working time. Therefore, during the workshops, participants were stimulated to think actively about the possible futures scenarios in 2050 and apply different foresight techniques including environmental scanning, Three Horizons and backcasting. The discussions were guided by two questions:

1. What is the future of regional development agencies in 2050?
2. What is one action your regional development agency should take today to be better prepared for possible futures?

SECTION II. FORESIGHT FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES

Definition, process and framework

Foresight is a structured and systematic approach to thinking about the future avenues and anticipating and preparing effectively for changes. It focuses on exploring different possible futures and the opportunities and obstacles they might bring. These insights are then used to improve decision-making and take proactive action in the present.

Futures literacy refers to the ability to understand, imagine, and engage with possible future scenarios. Futures literacy is increasingly recognised by educational institutions, governments, and international organisations as an essential skill for the 21st century.

In terms of process, foresight can be depicted as a three-step process: a progression through stages of Observation, Reflection, and Action. Each stage contains key activities related to understanding and managing change (Figure 1).

- **Observe**: This stage involves environmental scanning, which is the process of collecting, scrutinising, and interpreting information about external events and trends that can influence an organization's future. The aim is to scan and map signals and factors of change to understand the context in which the organisation operates.
- **Reflect**: In this phase, the information gathered during observation is used for strategic thinking. This means identifying and reframing possible futures based on the insights gained. Reflection is critical for making sense of the information and aligning it with the organisation's vision and goals.
- **Act**: The final stage is about taking what has been learned in the observation and reflection phases and turning it into a concrete strategic plan. This involves planning, implementing, and managing the change based on the strategic decisions made.

The arrow suggests that once actions are implemented, the process begins anew with observation to continually adapt and stay relevant in an ever-changing environment. Also, the model emphasises the importance of a continuous loop, suggesting that successful strategy and change management are not linear but rather iterative processes requiring constant adaptation.

Figure 1. A three-step process

OBSERVE
scan and map signals and factors of change
environmental scanning

REFLECT
identify and reframe possible futures
strategic thinking

ACT
plan, implement and manage the change
strategic planning
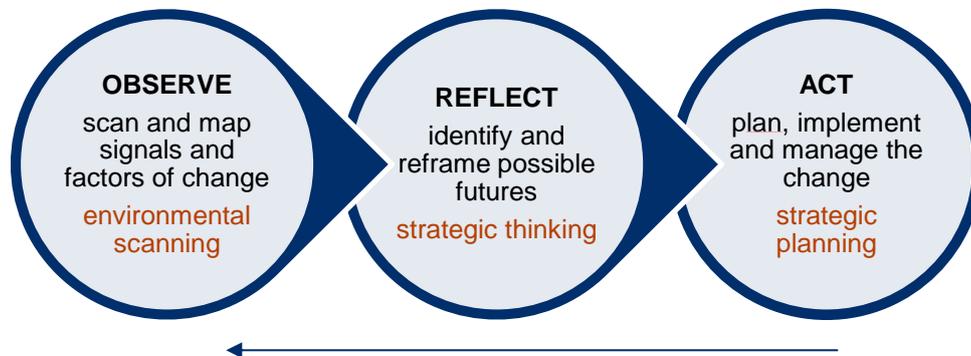
Source: Author's own elaboration.

The three-step process can be further deconstructed into a series of stages, that constitute what is known as a foresight framework. Scholars and practitioners have developed various, yet comparable, versions of foresight frameworks (Poli 2019, Hines et. al 2017, Hines and Bishop 2013, 2015, Inayatullah 2007). While they vary in the number of stages, they share common sequences and types of activities. According to Hines (2017), the foresight framework should provide a structured approach to develop a "start-to-finish" foresight, explore its implications and formulate a strategic action plan.

The following comprehensive framework was used by the workshop participants:

- **Framing**: domain and topic, geographic scope, time-horizon, issues, key questions, team, methods, agenda.
- **Intelligence gathering and mapping**: environmental scanning, horizon scanning, mega-trends, wild cards, emerging issues analysis, cross-impact analysis, Delphi, Futures Wheel, system analysis, stakeholder mapping, expert panel.
- **Visioning**: Three Horizons, scenarios, foresight workshop, backcasting, Causal Layered Analysis, serious games, Futures triangle.
- **Acting upon**: roadmapping, wind-tunneling, long-term strategy, action plan, change management.
- **Monitoring**: leading indicators and scanning for new signals of change.

True foresight mastery demands a holistic approach, encompassing all the stages of the foresight process. Foresight professionals must not only design a well-structured framework, but also possess a range of foresight techniques. Simply conducting trend analysis without integrating visioning and strategic planning is insufficient, as it falls short of achieving desired outcomes.

Foresight across sectors and governance levels

From international organisations such as UN agencies and the OECD, to national, regional governments and private entities, there is an increasing interest in foresight.

UN agencies use foresight to navigate complex global challenges. These efforts aim to promote a more equitable and sustainable future, addressing issues ranging from climate change to socio-economic disparities. In 2012 UNESCO launched the Futures Literacy Lab, an initiative to build futures literacy around the world, empowering people and communities to shape the future they want.[1]

The OECD's Observatory for Public Policy Innovation (OPSI) encourages governments to take a forward-looking approach to their innovation policies and practices. The Anticipatory Innovation Governance (AIG) model emphasises the importance of exploring future possibilities and preparing for them through innovative governance practices. OPSI is a rich community of foresight practitioners that facilitates exchange, collaboration and learning among experts and policy makers.[2]

The European Commission uses foresight to ensure that EU policies are fit for the future, taking a proactive approach to emerging trends and challenges. This approach ensures the resilience and adaptability of policies across the European Union's Member States. A prominent initiative is the EU Policy Lab and its Competence Centre on Foresight, which provides strategic and forward-looking advice to European Commission services.[3]

National governments around the world have embraced foresight as a way of designing policies that are more resilient to future uncertainties. These efforts are being mirrored at the regional level. One concrete example is the Welsh Assembly Government (United Kingdom), which is leading the way in integrating foresight into the design of its regional policies. In doing so, they are ensuring that policies not only respond to current needs, but also protect the interests of future generations. The Cymru Can long-term strategy was launched by the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales in 2023. [4]

RDAs can also benefit significantly from integrating foresight into their work. Situated at the intersection of government, industry and academia, regional development agencies have a unique mandate to act as a catalyst for economic development and innovation in their region. By adopting foresight practices, these agencies can move from traditional reactive strategies to proactive, future-oriented actions.

Integrating foresight into the work of regional development agencies

The integration of foresight within RDAs is crucial for long-term strategic planning. By incorporating foresight, RDAs can transform into visionary institutions, not merely reacting to changes but anticipating them, helping them to stay at the forefront of innovation, ready to meet future challenges and seize opportunities in their respective regions as they arise.

To maintain their vision and remain relevant, RDAs need to critically evaluate their future role. They should consider the impact they can have, the services they can provide and how they fit into the wider innovation ecosystem. Through foresight, RDAs can envision possible futures, adjust their strategic direction and ensure their continued relevance.

Moreover, foresight is not just a tool for RDAs to shape their trajectory, but also a means to contribute to the overarching aspirations of their regions. By being part of a strategy team that employs foresight, RDAs can align regional goals with a forward-thinking mindset, fostering a cohesive vision that propels the entire region forward.

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[1] Futures Literacy | UNESCO (accessed 18 March 2024).

[2] Anticipatory Innovation - Observatory of Public Sector Innovation (oecd-opsi.org) (accessed 18 March 2024).

[3] Foresight (europa.eu) (accessed 18 March 2024).

[4] Cymru Can: our Vision and Purpose – The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales (accessed 18 March 2024).

Embracing inclusive foresight is also crucial for RDAs to make local stakeholders and partners feel valued and involved. By actively engaging diverse voices in the foresight process, RDAs can create a sense of ownership and collaboration, which is essential for the successful implementation of any strategic plan. This inclusive approach enriches the planning process with multiple perspectives, leading to more robust and resilient strategies.

Understanding the future needs and preferences of current and potential customers is another critical reason why RDAs should embed foresight in their strategic planning. Anticipating and adapting to these future demands helps RDAs remain customer-centric, delivering services and support that align with evolving expectations.

Furthermore, foresight is instrumental in raising awareness of futures-driven innovation. By keeping an eye on the horizon, RDAs can identify emerging trends and technologies, providing them with the knowledge to champion innovative solutions and guide their region towards a competitive edge in the global market.

Integrating foresight into a Smart Specialisation strategy enhances its effectiveness by aligning regional development with future economic and social needs. This integration allows RDAs to not only identify key growth areas but also to invest in research and innovation strategically.

Finally, the use of foresight in imagining and designing a decentralisation process enables RDAs to consider various scenarios and their implications. This comprehensive outlook is important for planning a transition that is both sustainable and advantageous to the region's constituents.

Participants' views

The OECD Trento Centre for Local Development surveyed 40 RDAs from 19 countries to find out what they know and think about foresight. Foresight is seen as very valuable by 73% of respondents, as it can significantly improve planning and decision-making processes. Respondents believe that strong foresight capabilities can increase their region's resilience to external shocks. This is in line with their view that foresight specifically can help their RDAs to attract investment and promote economic development.

Another question explored the fundamental skills and competencies required for foresight. Participants' responses highlighted the importance of several key competencies, including creativity, open-mindedness, strategic thinking, data analysis, effective communication, relevant experience and the ability to work with others.

The most commonly cited challenges to integrating foresight into the work of their RDAs are resource constraints, in the form of a lack of time, financial or human resources. Another common challenge is skills gaps. These include data management and analysis, understanding of relevant methods and approaches, and more general skills such as leadership and the ability to translate insights into action.

Figure 2. Metimeter - regional foresight
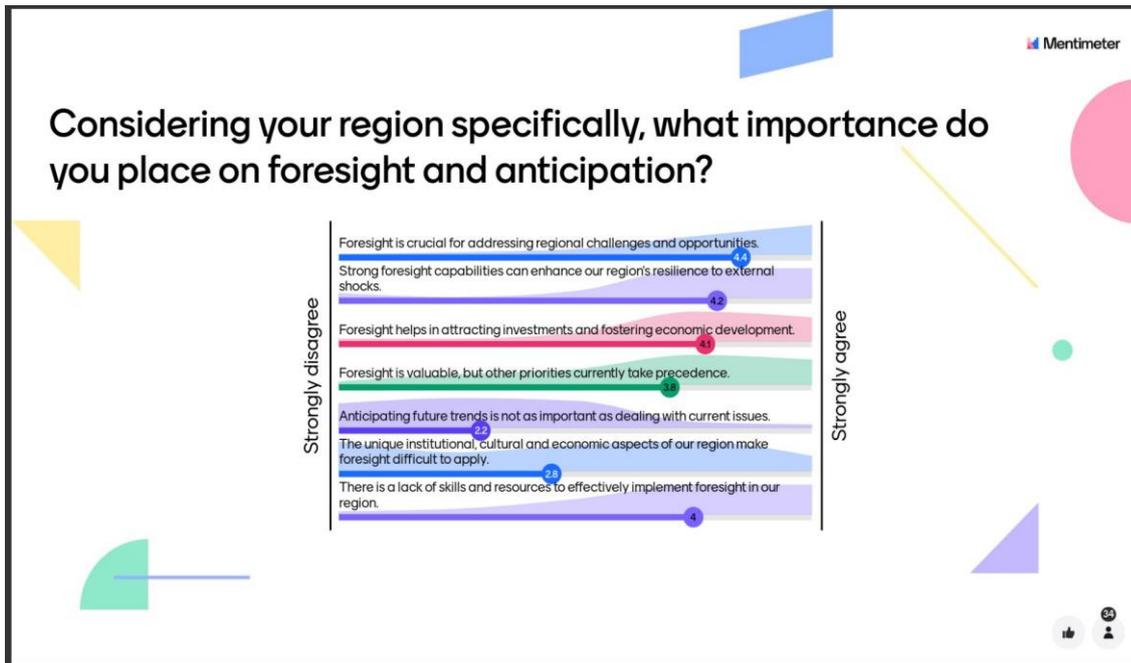
Megatrends and trends

Megatrends are large-scale social, economic, political, environmental, or technological changes that are slow to emerge but which, once established, exert a profound and lasting influence on many, if not most, human activities, processes and perceptions. The term "megatrends" was first coined by Naisbitt in 1982, describing them as unprecedented, systematic, and highly observable trends that significantly affect people's lives. The relative stability in the trajectory of these major forces of change allows us to envision at least some elements of our likely medium to-long term future with some degree of confidence.

Trends are similar in that they also refer to directions of change. However, they differ in their duration, impact and scale. Trends are shorter term, typically lasting a few years, and can affect specific industries, behaviours and territories. They do not necessarily affect the world as a whole.

AI and digitalisation are the most frequent megatrends discussed by the participants, reflecting a global shift towards more connected, smart, and efficient systems. Many also highlighted climate change, sustainability, and the transition to a green economy as key trends. Other megatrends included the demographics and aging population, which raises concerns about healthcare, pension systems, and the labour market.

In terms of trend, several participants pointed to economic challenges and trends, such as inflation and cost of living, energy, resource scarcity, and the general economic situation. In addition, a shortage of labour and skills was a recurring theme, alongside the need to reskill and address the brain drain. This reflects the broader challenge of preparing the workforce for the future economy, especially in the context of rapid technological advances and changing industrial needs.

SECTION III. FORESIGHT TECHNIQUES MASTERED DURING THE WINTER SCHOOL

Environmental scanning

Environmental scanning is a foresight method used for discovering early signs of potential change. It is an essential component of the foresight exercise and serves as a foundational method for understanding and anticipating future trends, challenges, and opportunities.

Participants were asked to identify key drivers of change that could significantly influence the future of their RDA. These drivers are key elements that can radically shape challenges and opportunities for the RDAs. The participants identified four main drivers of change and 16 sub-categories (Figure 3). The drivers of change span several areas: the changing nature of work, political turbulence, financial constraints, and climate change.

Figure 3. STEEP main drivers of change

Changing nature of work	Automation and AI, Skills and competences for green and digital jobs
Political turbulence	Elections in many constituencies, Radical political views, Populism, Infiltration of foreign agents in elections
Financial constraints	Public debt, Public budget constraints, Slowdown in EU economic growth, Cost of living, Financial viability limited by availability of public funding (EU, national, regional)
Climate change	Natural disasters: floods, droughts, major fires, hurricanes, earthquakes, Changing landscapes and places, e.g. no snow, insufficient water supply, Temperatures above seasonal averages, Longer periods of heat, especially in cities, Climate migration

Source: Author's own elaboration.

The drivers of change cover several areas: the changing nature of work, political turbulence, financial constraints, and climate change. The characteristics of each driver are described below.

Changing nature of work

- *Automation and AI*: The rise of automation and AI could significantly alter job markets. This change will require workforce upskilling and retraining to keep pace with the demand for new skills, especially as cognitive work will be complemented with AI and traditional roles become automated.
- *Skills and competencies for green and digital jobs*: this challenge might include fostering STEM education, supporting digital literacy programs, and collaborating with industries to anticipate future skills needs.

Political turbulence

- *Elections in many constituencies*: upcoming European, national, and local elections can lead to shifts in policy and priorities. This trend poses a challenge to RDAs that must remain adaptable to changing political landscapes and work to maintain continuity in their development programs.
- *Radical political views and populism*: with the rise of radical views and populism, RDAs could face challenges in policy implementation and consensus-building. They should strive to engage all local stakeholders to promote consensus and inclusive development.
- *Infiltration of foreign agents in elections*: this can lead to political instability and unpredictability in policymaking, which can have consequently affected RDA decision-making and operations.

Financial constraints

- *Public debt, budget constraints*: tightening budgets could limit the resources available to RDAs, and this will require RDAs to develop alternative financing models.
- *Slowdown in EU economic growth and increasing cost of living*: economic slowdowns and increasing cost of living will impact on prioritize economic resilience and support mechanisms for affordability in their regions.
- *Financial viability limited by availability of public funding*: this will put additional pressure on RDAs to diversify their funding sources and demonstrate the value and return on investment of their initiatives to secure funding.

Climate change

- *Natural disasters*: an increase in natural disasters will require effective planning for disaster risk reduction and improvement of infrastructure and communities to be resilient and operative even in case of natural disasters.
- *Changing landscapes and places*: RDAs will be pivotal in planning and managing the transition of regions facing significant environmental changes, promoting sustainability and liveability.
- *Heat*: longer periods of heat, especially in cities.
- *Climate migration*: RDAs and their respective regions may have to face the influx of climate migrants and displaced people.

Three Horizons

The Three Horizons (3H) framework, conceptualised by Bill Sharpe (Sharpe 2013), serves as a tool to foster transformative thinking. The 3H framework has been used extensively in guiding transformative innovation processes and helping to design systems and structures in support of positive change (Leicester 2016).

The discussion on the status quo, desired futures, and transitions underscores the multifaceted role that RDAs play in fostering economic growth and regional resilience. From the underlying assumptions about their current business model and operations to the disruptions and innovations envisioned for their transformation, the insights shared reflect the critical factors influencing the effectiveness of RDAs.

HORIZON 1

During first round of discussions on the status quo or "business as usual" (Horizon 1), participants laid down several assumptions about the RDAs' resources, services, staff, and clients, as well as their external operating environment. These insights provide a comprehensive overview of RDAs' current state and its interaction with the broader economic ecosystem.

The current stability and reliability of the system can be attributed to a combination of sound financial foundations, strategic positioning and governance, a clear and unique mission with added value, and a culture of engagement and collaboration. The bottom-up and grassroots approach, emphasis on skill and competence development, genuine support for local actors, and a neutral, consensus-building role are seen as foundational to RDAs success and impact. These factors create a cycle of support that enables RDAs to overcome challenges and maintain their role in the local ecosystem. To preserve this stability and reliability, it will be essential to continue to adapt to changing economic landscapes, nurture stakeholder relationships and ensure financial resilience against a backdrop of changing funding landscapes.

HORIZON 2

During the discussions on "disruption and innovation" (Horizon 2), participants were asked to reflect on possible disruptive changes and innovations emerging from technologies, socio-political occurrences, natural calamities, breakthrough ideas or social movements that could facilitate a positive and constructive transition towards the desired future.

The innovations and disruptive changes, as shared by participants, paint a vision of a digitally transformed ecosystem that is interconnected, inclusive, and strategically aligned at regional, national, and European Union levels. These suggestions underscore a collective ambition to harness digital technologies, data, and inclusive policies to foster economic growth and innovation.

Participants were presented with a series of inquiries intended to spark their imaginative thoughts:

- What innovations and disruptive changes should take place to create the future you want? (System level: region, country, EU)
- What disruptive innovations do you envisage within the RDA to create a new business model? (Organisational level)
- What competences, skills and other intangible resources are needed in the RDA? (People)

Considering the system level, participants identified following innovations:

- Fully digitised region with advanced digital services
- Shared data platforms
- Open data and data interoperability
- EU R&I strategy similar to Smart Specialisation
- Policies for connecting generations and inter-generational collaboration
- Talent attraction policies
- RDA integrated in policy advice mechanism

Envisioning disruptive innovations within regional development agencies to forge a new business model involves a multi-faceted approach. The suggestions from participants reflect a collective vision for RDAs

that are more dynamic, adaptive, and future-oriented in their operations and engagement with regional development. The participants proposed in particular the following innovations:

- Mixed interdisciplinary teams
- New job profiles, skills, and responsibilities
- Flat organisational structure
- Integrated foresight and strategic planning
- Agile project management
- AI-driven monitoring and evaluation
- Continuous learning processes
- Test beds and technology experimentation.

Moreover, the RDAs require a workforce endowed with a diverse and dynamic set of competences, skills, and intangible resources. The insights from participants highlight the critical areas for skill development and enhancement to ensure RDAs can fulfil their evolving role effectively. The requirements are the following:

- Digital skills and data proficiency
- Creativity, analytical and critical thinking
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Negotiation and interpersonal skills
- Continuous learning
- International experience and professional network
- Leadership skills

In summary, the disruptive innovations propose a transformative shift in how RDAs operate, emphasising interdisciplinary collaboration, organisational agility, strategic foresight, technological integration, and a continuous learning culture. Moreover, the competences, skills, and intangible resources such as digital skills, ability to use AI tools, data analysis skills, creativity, flexibility, analytical and critical thinking, problem-solving skills, flexibility, adaptability and others are foundational for RDAs aiming to navigate the complexities of regional development in the contemporary context.

HORIZON 3 – VISION FOR 2050

During visioning phase, participants were asked to think as visionary leaders and describe their desired future. They were presented with a series of questions designed to stimulate their creative thinking:

- What is the future you want to create? What are its key characteristics?
- What would it look and feel like to be in that future?
- What ideas, values and culture are embedded within that future?

The participants agreed on a shared desired vision for 2050, which can be read as follows:

In 2050, we envision regions in Europe where economies are resilient and sustainable, and RDAs are minimally dependent on political fluctuations. Regions thrive by focusing on social economy, inclusion and people's wellbeing. Cooperation across levels of government, the private sector, and civil society is smooth, driven by shared goals and supported by efficient use of data.

Our Regional Development Agency (RDA) is a trusted innovation hub within our country and across Europe. Renowned for its seamless integration into the international ecosystem, our RDA spearheads international projects and exerts significant influence on EU policymaking. RDAs are recognised as trusted partners by political and private sector actors, characterised by transparent and streamlined operations.

Financial sustainability is assured, as our RDA consistently secures international investment and EU funding, thanks to our proven track-record of success.

Concurrently, the RDA orchestrates transformative projects of substantial impact in our region, offers strategic counsel to regional authorities on a broad spectrum of local and national policies, and provides comprehensive support to businesses throughout their lifecycle, including entry, after-care, and exit stages.

Our achievements encompass attracting investments, generating employment opportunities, fostering workforce development, enhancing infrastructure, and facilitating regional planning. Our expertise extends beyond economic growth to address societal, environmental, climate-related, and health challenges, promoting overall wellbeing.

Our team comprises highly skilled professionals with interdisciplinary backgrounds and international experience, embodying a culture that values diversity, inclusivity, openness, and creativity. The workforce is empowered by digital literacy, with ongoing access to tailored, flexible training programs that ensure skills remain relevant. Our flat organisational structure and flexible working policies further enhance our operational effectiveness.

In embracing technological advancements, the RDA has integrated AI tools into everyday operations, promotes open data sharing with other RDAs, government bodies, the private sector, and has pioneered the adoption of a virtual working environment, including the metaverse. Our RDA has also established a strategic unit and integrated foresight into strategic planning with the objective to ensure that we remain at the forefront of innovation, ready to meet the challenges of the future while driving regional development and prosperity.

Backcasting

Backcasting is a strategic planning technique that begins with defining a desirable future state and then works backward to identify the policies, enabling conditions, actions, and milestones necessary to achieve that vision. In other words, backcasting is about asking, " If we want to achieve a desirable future or certain goals in the future, what actions need to be taken to get there? What are the timelines and milestones? What threats and opportunities might we face?"

Backcasting often involves stakeholders throughout the process to build consensus, foster creativity, and ensure that the envisioned future aligns with the values and goals of those impacted.

The technique consists of three main steps:

- Defining a desirable future
- Working backwards to identify the policies and programmes that will link that particular future to the present
- Developing a pathway of policies and actions that could bridge the gap, including milestones and indicators of progress along the way.

A detailed list of activities for the backcasting exercise is described in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Backcasting process and questions
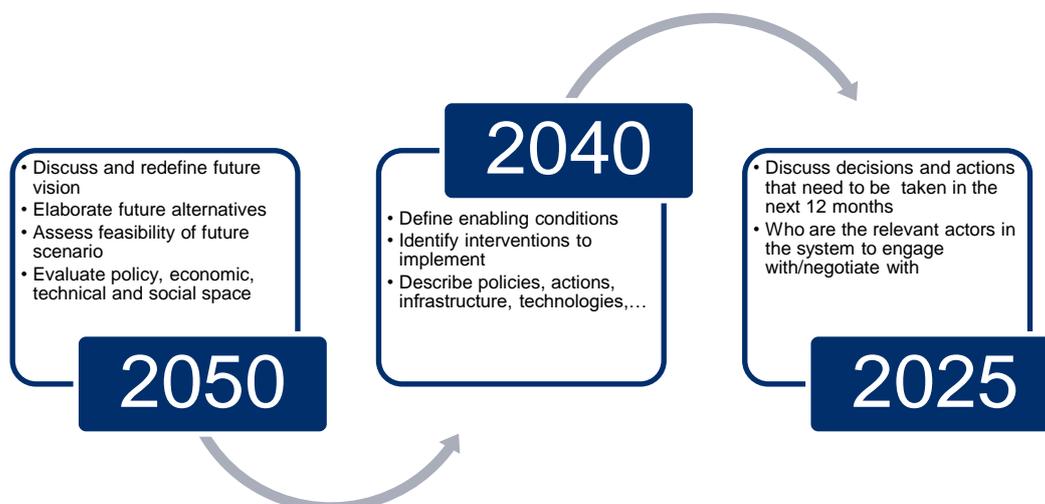
Source: Author's own elaboration.

Enabling Conditions for 2035:

- Multi-source financing models and development of partnerships to ensure economic resilience
- Inclusive labour policies, streamlined labour regulations, and a supportive legal framework for virtual collaboration and data sharing
- Targeted, flexible training programs and the creation of innovation hubs to foster cross-sector solutions to societal challenges
- Digital skills across all sectors and levels of society, coupled with efforts to reduce bureaucracy and improve operational transparency.

Enabling Conditions for 2025:

- Cross-sector partnerships and the creation of ecosystems that support innovation and inclusion
- Definition of rules and modes for virtual work, and the establishment of a legal framework that accommodates future work environments and data sharing
- Mapping of regional skills needs and capacity building for digital literacy
- Inclusive policy discussions and engaging private sector contributions towards social and economic goals.

Conclusions

The integration of future thinking and foresight methodologies within RDAs is crucial for long-term strategic planning. Foresight involves anticipating future trends and challenges to guide long-term strategic planning and decision-making.

To address the knowledge gap in RDAs, the OECD Trento Centre and EURADA have organised a series of foresight workshops. In total 40 people from 19 countries participated in the Winter School.

This hands-on experience equipped the participants with the skills and fundamental competencies essential for effective foresight, which included:

- Framing: defining the domain and topic, geographic scope, time-horizon, issues, key questions, team, methods, and agenda.
- Intelligence gathering and mapping: conducting environmental scanning with a focus on STEEP (Social, Technological, Economic, Environmental, and Political factors).
- Visioning: employing tools such as the Three Horizons framework and backcasting to develop strategic foresight and long-term visioning capabilities.

It was difficult to converge on a limited number of change drivers because participants came from different RDAs, regions and countries, and their territories are characterised by different levels of development, innovation, political and economic situation. However, the participants agreed that challenges posed by climate change, political instability and fast progressing digital and AI revolution are among the most radical challenges and great opportunities for the regional development agencies.

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More information about the project
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