



ART

Analysis and Research Team

February
2022

Newsletter

INTRODUCTION

Just over a year ago, a new “Analysis and Research Team” took shape in the General Secretariat of the Council. Its task: to provide analysis and foresight to help in the strategic planning and policy-making process over the medium to long term.

This involves the eight officials in the team stepping back from the day-to-day work of the Council and European Council and looking at the bigger picture. Our job is to look in particular at cross-cutting issues, and assess their likely impact on the EU in the longer term. We are not in the business of putting forward concrete policy recommendations, but instead we work with colleagues across the Council Secretariat to look at issues from a new perspective and to put things in a broader context.

A significant part of our output takes the form of written products, many of which we have made available not just to our colleagues in the Council Secretariat, but also more widely. To see our papers we encourage you to visit the [Council website](#).

We have also arranged various **lunchtime talks** on specific topics. We aim to get an expert’s view. So our focus is on inviting people from outside the institutions to give us the benefit of their experience and insights. We include colleagues from the Secretariat who are following the issue, and we deliberately keep these talks rather small to encourage an open and free-flowing discussion.

The Analysis and Research Team is an innovation for the General Secretariat. It reflects a growing interest across all the EU institutions in providing the space to think ahead. There is a wide range of issues which are influencing our business or which are likely to do so in the future. The EU cannot afford to be simply reactive in the face of a rapidly changing (and often challenging) world. We hope that ART’s work plays a modest part in helping us all see the bigger picture, look ahead, plan and be better prepared.

Guy Milton - Head of ART

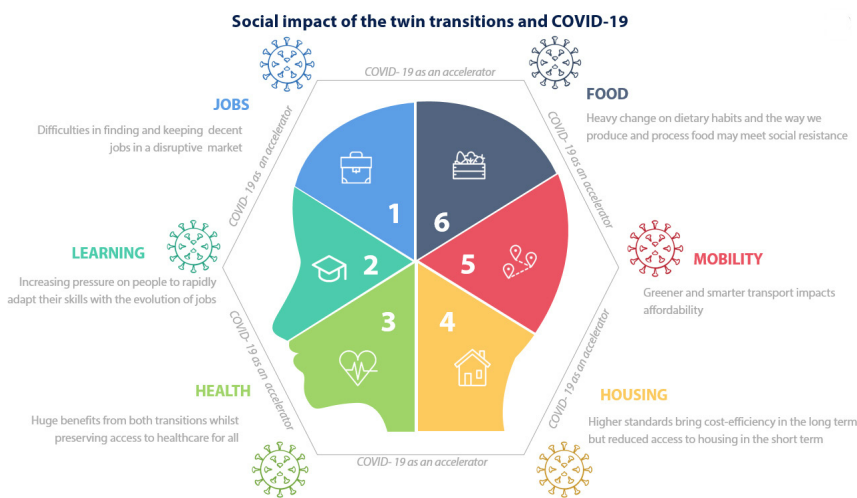
OUR PUBLICATIONS

Our written products are intended to encourage readers to think 'out of the box' and to see issues within a global context. By adopting a cross-cutting approach, our aim is to stimulate reflection on a wide range of aspects of contemporary geopolitics.

By setting out the issues and the broad policy choices for the Union on key issues such as [strategic autonomy](#) and the [future of world trade](#), we encourage reflection on how the EU should develop its ability to promote and defend its values in an increasingly disruptive and challenging world. Issues such as China's growing influence in international organisations and its presence in Africa illustrate just how much global power is shifting.

Our analyses on [Artificial Intelligence](#) and the [social impact of the green and digital transitions](#), highlight the extent to which society is going to have to adapt to these developments, as well as the costs that they will entail.

These significant transformations are taking place at the same time as other challenges emerge. Changes in the currencies landscape are covered in our paper on [the international role of the euro](#) which is linked to how to measure prosperity and wellbeing. This is analysed in our publication on [Beyond GDP](#). Here we ask whether the traditional focus on the GDP metric is still fit for purpose. All of these questions have implications for a wide range of policy areas.



As part of our preparatory work, we have begun to develop a network of contacts in academia, think tanks and other organisations. Their reflections are a very useful complement and stimulus to our own thinking. But our aim is always to move beyond the purely academic and to bear in mind the practical implications of any issue for the Council and European Council.

Bonne lecture!

ESPAS

The Analysis and Research Team plays an active role in supporting the European Strategy and Policy Analysis System (ESPAS), which was set up over 10 years ago. It aims to encourage staff in the EU institutions to cooperate in promoting foresight and in looking at how longer term trends are influencing the future of the EU.

Our work on the issue of the polarisation of politics and the factors that are driving the rise of [populism](#) has also been the subject of discussion in ESPAS. This is an issue of concern to all the institutions, and it led to our paper on populism which has been published by both the Council and ESPAS.

Over the last year, we have provided input to the annual ESPAS two-day conference, which was followed by over 3000 viewers. Two members of ART have also been selected to participate in the ESPAS Young Talent Network, which consists of younger EU officials from across the institutions who provide new ideas and fresh thinking about future trends and challenges.

USING STRATEGIC FORESIGHT TO HELP INNOVATIVE THINKING

Strategic foresight is a collaborative and pluralistic discipline focused on the systematic exploration of possible futures, in a way which is both rigorous and imaginative. A wide range of tools are now widely used in both the public and private sector, for example to ‘scan’ the environment for signals of change, to identify trends and uncertainties, and to envisage future scenarios.

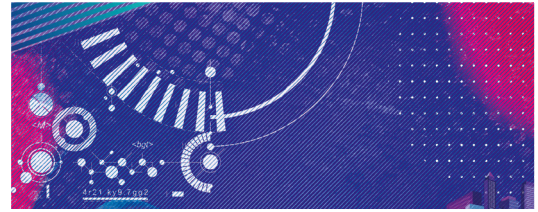
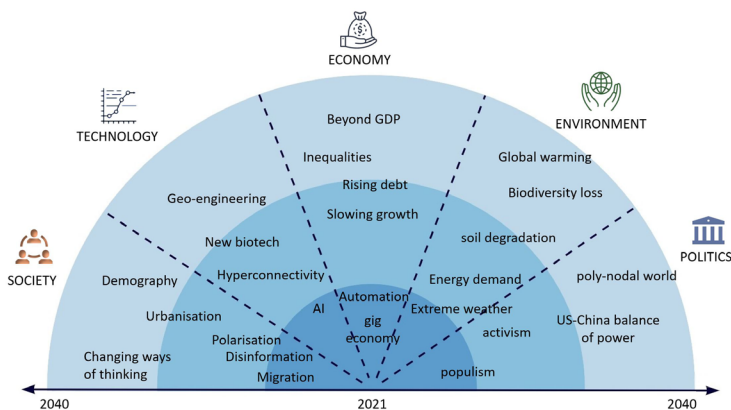
Foresight is not about predicting the future. In fact, one of the basic assumptions of foresight is that our world is too volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous to allow for any long-term predictions. Foresight is rather about the present. It deepens our understanding of the present, with the aim of ‘future-proofing’ our societies and organisations and shaping our preferred future.

Over the year, we have incorporated foresight into much of our reflection. It was an important part of our **work on populism**, where we looked at four possible futures. These scenarios show that populism could perhaps play a transformative role in bringing about positive political change.

Foresight has also been central to our research into the main trends likely to influence the work of the Council and European Council in the year ahead.

Our **‘Forward Look 2022’** offers insights based on analysis of long, medium and shorter-term trends. It was drafted with the help of colleagues from across the GSC who took part in several foresight workshops organised by ART.

Example of a trends radar (source: ART)



INTERGENERATIONAL FAIRNESS

In June, the Analysis and Research team hosted an intergenerational event to engage GSC trainees and more senior colleagues in a discussion on the EU’s long-term challenges and opportunities.

The starting point of this discussion, in hybrid format, was a [recent reflection paper](#) prepared by ART on the need for a people-centred EU approach to the green and digital transitions. The paper looks at the different ways individuals are likely to be affected by the twin transitions: jobs, learning, health, food, mobility and housing. What better way to test the relevance of the paper than to involve colleagues of different ages?

The event enabled us to talk about the future for the next generations and helped develop a shared understanding of the key issues shaping the next few decades, and their implications for today’s decision-makers. Whereas trainees highlighted the importance of a change of mind-set and a more positive narrative, GSC staff underlined the uneven effects of the twin transitions on different socio-economic groups.

Both trainees and GSC staff valued the opportunity to exchange views in an informal setting. The event was part of a wider initiative to encourage closer dialogue between the generations. Such exchanges contribute to the growing awareness of intergenerational fairness, which aims at creating policies that allow people of all ages to meet their present needs without compromising the opportunities of future generations.