



Long-term strategic analysis for EU policy-making

In an intertwined and rapidly changing world, the identification and analysis of major medium- and long-term trends aims to help policy-makers deal with key challenges that the future is likely to bring. Four EU institutions are currently developing a common "European Strategy and Policy Analysis System".

Context

Public authorities from many countries invest in different kinds of strategic foresight activities: [examples](#) include Finland, the Netherlands, Singapore and the United Kingdom. In the United States (US), the [National Intelligence Council \(NIC\)](#) is in charge of long-term strategic analysis. Amongst other documents, the NIC produces a [report](#) on global trends that is published after each US presidential election. This report aims to provide US policy-makers with a view on possible key developments across the world, including related opportunities and threats.

European Union institutions

EU institutions devote time and resources to strategic analysis. One example is provided by the [Bureau of European Policy Advisers \(BEPA\)](#) of the Commission (EC), whose [tasks](#) include monitoring geopolitical trends which affect Europe's position and action. Another instance is the "[European Parliament in 2025](#)" report presented by the Secretary-General of the EP, after an [extensive analysis](#) of major trends likely to have an impact on the institution.

In addition, the EP has been pushing to enhance regular cooperation between EU institutions in this domain. A [2009 resolution](#) underlined the need for long-term strategic thinking on policy issues from an EU perspective, calling for the development of a system of analysis similar to that of the NIC.

European Strategy and Policy Analysis System (ESPAS)

On the EP's initiative, the 2010 EU budget included a [pilot project](#) to explore the possibility of establishing an inter-institutional

system of strategic analysis of major trends likely to affect the EU. Parliament, the Council, the EC and the European External Action Service joined forces to build the [European Strategy and Policy Analysis System \(ESPAS\)](#).

In April 2012, the pilot phase culminated in the publication of [Global trends 2030: Citizens in an interconnected and polycentric world](#). This report by the [European Union Institute for Security Studies \(EUISS\)](#) analysed major trends that are likely to shape the world in the years to come, including: 1) empowerment of individuals and a rising global middle class; 2) climate change and resource scarcity; and 3) a polycentric world with power more diffuse.

Under the 2012 EU budget, the project moved to the next phase, becoming a [preparatory action](#). The objective is to have ESPAS fully functioning by 2014, involving all relevant EU institutions. In this context, contractors have been tasked with gathering relevant data under the supervision of three [working groups](#) that are focusing on studying: 1) [global economy](#); 2) [social change](#) (including demography, mobility and sustainability); and 3) [international governance and power](#). In 2013, this work should result in three trend reports that will serve as a basis for the ESPAS report for the incoming Presidents of the EU institutions next year. An open repository with all relevant information is also foreseen.

Budgets Committee report

In a July 2013 [report](#) (rapporteur James Elles, ECR, United Kingdom), the EP's Committee on Budgets welcomed progress achieved so far in developing an ESPAS. It recommended that the process be pursued after 2014, indicating a series of points that should be taken into account when setting up a permanent system in a budgetary neutral way. The Committee report, which the plenary is due to consider in October 2013, says that the system should also provide specific input to Parliament and Council for future work on the [Multiannual Financial Framework](#) (e.g. mid-term revision and preparation of next programming period).