Foresight programmes in Europe: links to policymaking processes

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The 3rd International Conference on Foresight, NISTEP Tokyo, 19-20 November, 2007

Outline

Motivation Application of foresight in Europe Policy challenges: why to conduct foresight Innovation policy and foresight The impact of foresight on policy Foresight and policy-making processes Conclusions and recommendations

Main sources: Havas, A., Schartinger, D., Weber, M. [2007] Havas, A., Keenan, M. [2008]

Motivation

Apparent success of F: widely used to underpin public policies [and business strategies, yet, corporate F is not covered]

- BUT: 'hype disappointment cycle' for F, too?!?
 - initial enthusiasm → scepticism in several countries
 - more realistic assessment of strengths and weaknesses of various types of prospective analyses

Thus, a close look at the actual and expected impacts of F, with a particular emphasis on policy impacts

Application of foresight in Europe: Wide-ranging and diverse

Widely used

advanced EU member states (e.g. UK, Germany, France, Finland, Sweden, Austria, etc.)

- 'cohesion' countries of the EU15 (Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Greece)
- new EU member states (before or after joining the EU: Hungary, CR, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia, etc.) non-EU countries (Norway, Turkey, Russia, Ukraine)

Repeated in several countries UK, Germany, Sweden

Methodological diversity

Delphi & 'panels'; Delphi only; panels only; etc.

Application of foresight in Europe: More elements of diversity

Geographical territories covered

local/regional national transnational (regions, countries)

Socio-economic domains

industrial sectors or clusters types of firms, e.g. SMEs

Policy fields

transport, energy, innovation, etc.

Specific issues/ challenges

women entrepreneurship, ageing, flooding, crime prevention, etc.

Sponsors and clients of foresight in Europe

Governments

national local/regional

The European Commission

co-financing F programmes promoting F in various ways

> financing projects on F (training, development of methods, manuals, guidelines, policy analyses, etc.)

* organising F events (awareness raising, networking of practitioners and policy-makers)

Professional associations

Businesses

Policy challenges: why to conduct foresight

Complex, inter-related challenges (quality of life, HR, social gaps, globalisation, environment, etc.) ⇒ new approaches, methods

Change attitudes and norms

Develop new skills

Speed of technological changes vs. ability to devise appropriate policies

Cut budget deficits

Improve accountability

Ease social concerns about new technologies

Facilitate co-operation, networking

Specific challenges in emerging economies

- General pressures: even stronger
- Loss of former markets ⇒ the need to find new ones
- Fragile international competitiveness
- Poor quality of life
- Brain drain \rightarrow circulation
- Short ↔ long-term issues
- Raise the profile of STI issues in politics and when devising economic policies



Strengthened, re-aligned NIS

Foresight

Innovation policy and Foresight: A large potential for synergies...

Innovation is a horizontal, cross-cutting policy matter Growing interdependence of policy-areas, most notably energy, environment, transport, regional development

The formation of innovation policy strategies is a continuous interactive learning process Not only between policies, but with various actors in STI as well as in thematic policies

Innovation policy-makers are not perfectly informed social planners

More problematic in innovation policy than in other areas

Innovation policy and Foresight: A large potential for synergies (2)

Innovation policy foresight as a 'meta' policy co-ordination mechanism

- mediates between different policy actors, different stakeholder communities, different policy areas
- creates a culture of long-term strategic thinking
- helps create an infrastructure of "distributed policy intelligence"

Innovation policy and Foresight: the context

Governance culture

Elaborated strategic intelligence instruments in place: the impact of F depends on its position in the hierarchy of instruments, windows of opportunity, etc.

Without elaborated strategic intelligence instruments: catching-up processes may be structured through highly inclusive, integrative and consensus-oriented F

Policy attention

May increase the leverage of F in countries with a wide range of policy support mechanisms

Socio-economic dynamics

Expected major structural changes may speed up policy learning through F compared to countries in stable phases

Resource availability

The availability of resources facilitates their allocation to futureoriented and new activities resulting from F

Impacts of foresight: a framework

Function	Time lag	Targeted and/or unintended impact
Informing	Immediate	Increased recognition of topic area
		 Awareness of science and technology among players, creating debate
		Awareness of systemic character
		Training of participants in foresight matters
		New combinations of experts and stakeholders, shared understanding (knowledge network)
	Intermediate	Articulation of joint visions of the future, establishing longer-term perspectives
	Ultimate	 Integrate able new actors in the community
Counselling	Immediate	Make hidden agendas and objectives explicit
	Intermediate	Formulation of recommendations and options for action
		 Activate and support fast policy learning and policy unlearning processes
		• Identify hidden obstacles to the introduction of more informed, transparent, open participatory processes
		to governance
	Ultimate	Influence on research/policy agendas of actors, both public and private (as revealed, for instance, in
		policy strategies and programmes)
		 Incorporate forward-looking elements in organisations' internal procedures
Facilitating	Immediate	Effective actions taken
	Intermediate	Formation of action networks
		Creation of follow-up activities
	Ultimate	Adoption of foresight contents in the research and teaching agenda of organisations (e.g. University of
		Malta); Foresight spin-off activities in various disciplines (see Malta)
		Improvement of coherence of policies
		 Cultural changes towards longer-term holistic and systemic thinking

Source: ARC sys, based on Cassingena Harper and Georghiou (2005), PREST (2006) and ForSociety (2007)

Impacts of Foresight on innovation policy

Functions of F to be assessed

- policy informing
- policy advisory/ strategic counselling
- policy facilitating

The cases considered: evaluated national F programmes

- UK
- eForesee in Malta (international programme)
- Hungary
- Sweden

First results from the evaluation reports

Policy informing

- Results of F: a 'reservoir' of knowledge
- Uneven way as active inputs into the political process
- Quality and trustworthiness of the reports: of value in decision-making processes

Strategic counselling

 Time lag between F and the use of F results in policymaking ⇒ extremely difficult to evaluate the impacts

Policy facilitating

 "Soft" evidence of the sustainable creation of new linkages and of networks of major stakeholders

Impacts of Foresight on policy: Critical issues

Enrolment of able new actors and formation of actor networks

- Network-building is at least as important as the 'tangible products' of F
- The added-value of F increases when it is possible to overcome traditional sectoral/disciplinary barriers
- Engaging able, new actors forges novel linkages within the innovation system and increases the recognition of F results

Interested customers with absorptive capacities

 Lack of resources to 'digest' and absorb F results naturally inhibits their implementation

Impacts of Foresight on policy: Critical issues (2)

Ownership of results

 The more path-breaking the results of F, the more likely their implementation is beyond the scope of individuals, departments or even ministries

The congruence of actors in FS and political advice

 Actors who advice ministries are often the same that take a lead part in FS ⇒ especially hard to isolate impacts

Time horizon

 The longer the time horizon of F ⇒ the more revolutionary the results and the more wide-ranging the implications

F and policy-making processes: Dilemmas, inherent contradictions

Long-term nature of foresight issues (policy recommendations) ↔ substantially shorter time horizon of politicians (some policy-makers)

Strong ('distant') political support, embeddedness ↔ intellectual, organisational, financial independence

F and policy-making processes: Dilemmas, inherent contradictions (2)

- Departmentalised government structures ↔ complex issues (health, quality of life, environment, competitiveness, etc.)
 - 18-19th century gov't structures ↔ 21th century issues
- Public resources financial and intellectual ones – should be pulled together to make a real difference in an efficient (co-ordinated) way
- Yet, they are allocated to different ministries and other government agencies

What can NOT be expected

Setting posteriorities (as opposed to priorities) Strictly controlled processes Quick, direct, easy results Exact measures of economic impacts

Complexities: Difficulties of measurement

S&T developments Education, RTDI policies S&T labour (skills, morale) Organisations (labs, firms, etc.) Social and other factors

Foresight Economic policies FDI, global trends Firms strategies Social and other factors



Conclusions

Complexities of economically, socially and environmentally sustainable development

Strengthen the role of *STI policies* in tackling them

Foresight processes can assist decision-makers facing these complex, demanding tasks

Use F to underpin STI policies and beyond

The requirements from the new application domains of F are different from STI policies

Conclusions (2)

F is a policy tool (not a scientific project!)

Embedding foresight in the decision-making processes is a far from trivial task

It is crucial to evaluate F programmes, but new methods are needed

Difficulties of evaluating impact are intrinsic to the role of F

I solating the effects of single FS activities on a complex and continuous process like policy-making is the more difficult, the closer the inter-action between foresight and policy-making

References

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