25TH EU-NGO FORUM ON HUMAN RIGHTS
4-5 DECEMBER 2023

ORGANISED BY

HRDN
Human Rights & Democracy Network

YOUTH AS ACTORS OF CHANGE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Preparatory and Learning Journal: Foresight Sessions

Build the Right Future

Are you ready to explore the future?

Welcome to the beginning of your foresight journey! This is a journey where you will learn to see the world in a different way. With a wider gaze and eyes full of curiosity, a journey to transform your mind-set and even to start shaping the future.

So, let us start from the beginning – *what is foresight?*

At its simplest, Foresight is the structured process of thinking about possible futures. The future is yet to be written, so it is up to us to shape it!

But thinking about the future is not easy. There are so many possibilities that it is easy to get lost, lose hope or simply repeat stories about the future that we already know and have heard before.

We want to help you to think creatively, build your skills in thinking about multiple futures and develop novel recommendations for policymakers.

The skills involved in 'futures thinking' also allow us to better understand the role that the future plays in our own lives. We hope that during the EU-NGO Forum on Human Rights, you will experience the personal benefits of being better at anticipating and planning for your own futures.

EU Definitions

Foresight is the discipline of exploring, anticipating and shaping the future to help build and use collective intelligence in a structured and systemic way to anticipate developments

Futures is a concept that indicates the presence of possible alternatives that might happen, and the need to consider them.

Why should we think about the future?

Young people will inherit the consequences of today's decisions, but all too often have no say in them. The Youth Action Plan in EU external action (YAP) sets a great framework for the EU to better engage with and empower young people worldwide. In this journey, the EU is committed to overcome blind spots, ways of thinking and methods that do not cater for the concerns of young people.

Foresight is a methodology with tools that can create space for young people to think freely, outside of institutional norms, and offer alternatives to current decision-making paradigms. Combining a structured yet creative approach to thinking through policy problems, Foresight can help young people to:

- Generate genuinely novel ideas and policy messages
- Build young people's legitimacy in expert spaces
- Give young people a mandate to speak truth to power
- Make complex topics energising and exciting

Your Foresight journey at the EU-NGO Forum on Human Rights

The sessions will provide:

- a **time**, outside day-to-day pressure, to think about the future, to develop futures literacy competences,
- a **space** to reflect around new developments and trends, how they interact, and how they could impact your work,
- a **"safe" space**, allowing you to be disruptive (even vis à vis corporate narratives) and innovative.

We will use foresight tools designed to build on collective intelligence and trigger strategic reflections. This will enable you to experience the power of futures thinking and foresight as a working method, to enjoy a futures-looking strategic conversation (structured brainstorming) and shift your perspective from short-term to longer-term. The sessions will have an "exploration phase" and a "landing phase".

In the exploration phase, we will first use the **futures wheel**, taking you form the starting point of present trends - and propelling you into the future. The purpose is to spark creativity, excitement and to explore further and further into the future, while identifying the impacts of these trends in the human rights field and actors, as well as interrelationships/chain reactions and their related risks and opportunities.

The **three horizons** will follow, helping you to develop a holistic systems perspective of human rights,
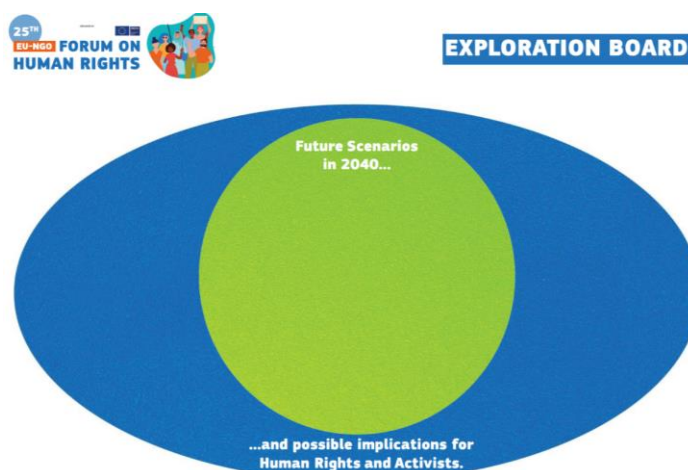
exploring both the present and the future in the same exercise. The tool offers a simple and applicable model to describe how systems change happens, how a transition could occur in a specific system of interest, as well as what actions are needed to support that transition.

When we hit the core of the landing phase, it will be time to reflect and take action. 'So what' does all this mean for our work in human rights—our frameworks, how we wield influence, and how we collaborate? And 'now what' actions can we take when we return from the Forum? It is about turning our discussions into real, impactful steps forward for the months ahead.

Instructions

First Session – Monday, December 4ᵗʰ (11-12h30 CET)
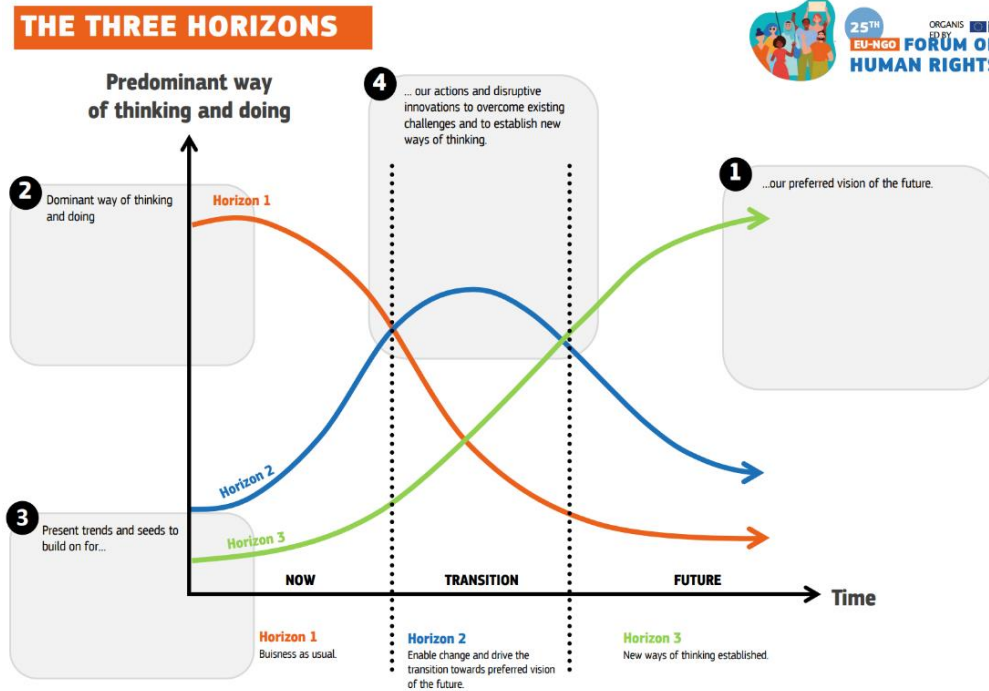
Tool 1: Futures Wheel

Step 1: With your group, collectively **select two trends** among all the possible ones carefully prepared by DG INTPA (see an overview of all the trends on p.8 of this dossier). You will explore the implications of your chosen signals of change further and place them in the middle of the Exploration Board (10 minutes)

Step 2: Think about the **impacts of your chosen trends** (in isolation, or when thought in interaction) in a world where they developed to the mainstream, focusing on **future scenarios for 2040**. The ideas are noted down on post-its in the green area of the Exploration Board (20 minutes)

Step 3: Collect your thoughts on the implications of what you have discussed for the overall situation of human rights, but also your role as a human rights activist yourself. This impact can entail challenges, opportunities, and uncertainties. The ideas are noted down on post-its in the blue area of the Exploration Board (25 minutes)

<u>Tool 2: Three Horizons</u>

Step 4: Delving into the future even further, think about how **your preferred future** would look like. Reflect on those issues you discussed previously and seem to you as a positive or negative prospect (box nº1) (15 minutes)

Second Session – Tuesday, December 5th (13h30-15h CET)

<u>Tool 1: Three Horizons</u>

Step 1: Reconnecting with the previous day's tool, think about **established aspects of today's world and systems** that you criticize, especially contrasting with your preferred future (box nº2) (10 minutes)

Step 2: Connecting your explored hopeful future back to conditions of the present, collect aspects of your **preferred future already visible in the present**. These can be trends and seeds (box nº3) (15 minutes)

Step 3: Discuss the **options for intervention and action** to overcome the gaps and obstacles, take advantage of the opportunities, we face and will face. Dig deeper into what was discussed during the Futures Wheel, trying to find an answer to those challenges, opportunities and uncertainties to **drive the transition in our favour** and enable the change needed to get to our preferred future. Use **action verbs** (e.g. facilitate, run, organize, generate, etc.) when formulating ideas (box nº4) (15 minutes)
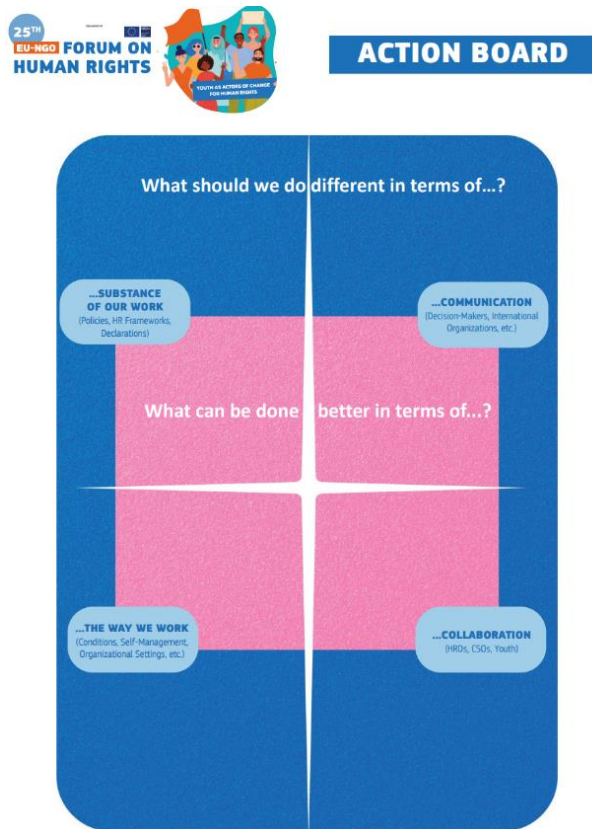
Tool 2: Action Board

Step 4: After having explored your preferred future and identified actions for overcoming obstacles and taking advantage of opportunities in the present, ask yourself: **"So what?"**

What should we **do different** (blue area) and what can be done **better** (pink area) in terms of…

- the **substance of our work** (frameworks, policies, declarations)
- the way we **communicate** and influence power (decision-makers, international organisations, etc.)
- the way we **collaborate** as human rights activists, civil society organisations and youth
- the way we **work** (conditions, self-management, organizational settings, etc.)

The ideas are noted down in post-its in the respective areas (35 minutes)

Step 5: Time to reflect silently on **"now what?"** Create your own personal agenda for the coming months based on what you have collectively revealed, learned, and discussed during the two Foresight sessions. Formulate in the next page of the dossier concrete actions you strive to implement in your own environment and with colleagues met during the Forum, including what, how, when, and who (10 minutes)

Getting prepared for the sessions

You will be divided into groups of 10-12 participants to ensure the best mix in each of them (gender, profile, expertise, etc.) and to cater for language preferences as flagged in the survey. There will be around 12 groups, co-facilitated by volunteer participants and staff from the European Commission.

Material to read ahead of the sessions:

- List of trends in Annex (p.8)
- Rules of the Foresight sessions (p.11)

NOW WHAT

WHAT   **HOW**   **WHEN**   **WHO**

What next ?

Facilitators will be responsible for collating and synthesizing the ideas generated during the sessions.

At the Forum:

The culmination will be a cohesive virtual action board aggregating all the discussed ideas—a comprehensive collective output reflecting the Forum's discussions and conclusions.

Post-Forum:

A detailed report will analyse insights from each group, based on the trends selected and highlighting key recommendations from the action boards. This report, disseminated to participants and organizers, will also serve as valuable input for the Foresight work of the Directorate-General for International Partnerships of the European Commission.

We also hope that, after the Forum, you'll be ready to conduct and facilitate your own Foresight workshops within your organizations and networks. This preparatory and learning journal should also serve as a toolkit you can share with more colleagues!

Picture	Examples of trends with potential impacts in the Human Rights field	Driver
	Decolonising thoughts and models – Dominant narratives (male, white, capitalist) are pushed back by grassroot cultural and social movements reclaiming heritage, history and are expressing alternative aspirations for the future. In parallel, calls for a "pluriversality" of values are increasingly heard. A pluriversal understanding of time could open new ways to face the social and ecological crisis, consider goals such as wellbeing and environmental preservation, and understand "progress".	Political and Geopolitical
	Unipolarity versus Multipolarity – Regional powers and various organizations are calling for a fair seat at the table. Many countries are taking a more interest-based, transactional approach to alternative offers of support, moving beyond the on-going 'battle of narratives' into a 'battle of offers', especially resources-rich countries are gaining leverage. At the same time, this trend provides a window of opportunity for new partnerships and dialogues on equal base.	Geopolitical and Ecological
	Younger generations rising for a just, sustainable and inclusive future – Youth are driving change and innovation for a sustainable future as well as advocating for collective action, e. g. on climate change, inequality, and discrimination. They legitimately demand swifter and more courageous solutions, especially to global challenges, and want to be heard and involved in decision-making processes. Yet, there is the struggle with difficult trade-offs between present urgencies and future interests as well as with contradictions between discourse and consumption patterns. Additionally, an intergenerational trust crisis, coupled with mistrust in traditional institutions and media poses challenges.	Political and Socio-Economic
	Strong call for innovative and sustainable finance mechanisms – Public budgets are quite limited, especially after the pandemic, with the rise of regional conflicts, highly volatile energy as well as food prices. At the same time, there is a need to sustainably finance the green and digital transition. There is a strong call for innovative finance mechanisms, a new narrative on debt and a push back against various forms of debt servitude to the financial institutions of "the North" – but also increasingly to China.	Geopolitical and Socio-Economic

	Polarisation, the call for the extremes – Trust in political parties, governmental, media and international institutions as well as in the enforcement of international law and contracts is declining. Additionally, this crisis is exacerbated by digital technologies and its programmed algorithms which can multiply disinformation and increases the risk of hybrid warfare.	Political and Technological
	Mental Health and Social Cohesion at risk – Uncertainties arising from the negative effects of climate change, such as record-braking temperatures, storms, fires and floods as well as inflation are undermining people's mental wellbeing, increasing inequalities, the feeling of distress as well as of powerlessness. These insecurities, additionally fuelled by regional and local conflicts, especially affect the social cohesion	Ecological and Socio-Economic
	Human-Nature: From exploitation to symbiosis – There is a surge in calls for a reconsideration of our relationship to nature, that might culminate in legislation for nature and animals.	Ecological and Political
	Trade patterns under reconfiguration – Following cascading disruptions due to health crisis, regional conflicts and climate extreme events, challenging established value-chains, many countries and regions are trying to establish more resilient value chains to secure their autonomy. While this development speeds up the green and digital transition, it also raises concerns over environmental and social implications (e.g. regarding extraction and processing minerals). Despite innovative solutions, it could again lead to new scarcities and conflicts (e.g., arctic, deep-ocean and space are being explored without an agreed regulatory framework).	Socio-Economic and Ecological
	Virtuality: emotions at play, ethics at risk – Digitalisation, social networks, artificial intelligence, and the metaverse are changing what it means to be human and live in a democracy: blended boundaries between reality and virtuality, new battles for attention, and biased issues raised in public arenas. While society has invested trillions in building digital platforms and tools, we have invested a small amount in understanding the ethics, values, social dynamics, identities, and biases of digital communities.	Technological and Socio-Economic
	Gender and multiple identities – Progress in terms of gender equality remains inconsistent, with backlashes all around the world (e.g., erosion of reproductive rights, increase of gender-based violence, FGM and online harassment amongst other issues). The recognition of non-binary genders and fluidity emphasises the need for modern societies to embrace diversity for gender equality and human rights. The possibility of crafting diverse identities as digital representations of ourselves in the virtual space open the question of the very definition of "self".	Political and Technological

Game-Changer: Humanity entering the (generative) AI era

 (Generative) AI will have far-reaching implications across most sectors: healthcare, education, finance, public administration, justice and legislation, agriculture, energy, and culture. The increased use of large language models has sparked concerns about their effects on democratic engagement and, ultimately, democracy itself. While these models could aid communication between citizens and policymakers, they could undermine traditional forms of democratic engagement too. A massive impact on jobs market, especially for knowledge and creative workers is expected. Some anticipate a structural labour market churn of 23% of jobs in the next five years. Reskilling and upskilling are becoming an urgent imperative, to be able to collaborate with (generative) AI systems, understand their capabilities, and leverage their potential. Societal impacts are expected. How major IT economies, and/or public-sector led economies will cope is still to be seen.

Rules of the Foresight sessions

- Share your thoughts within short periods (<1 minute), as each step of the workshops has a limited time and everyone should be able to have a say.

- Actively listen to your partners-in-crime! Engage with them in a respectful way. No one is right or wrong. All opinions are important and reflect our diverse views and cognitive biases on systemic issues.

- Ensure everyone has a say! If you're an extrovert, be mindful of giving space for quieter voices to contribute. If you're an introvert, feel encouraged to share your insights, knowing your perspective is invaluable.

- Respect confidentiality. Ideas shared during the sessions are considered confidential unless explicitly agreed upon for public sharing. This helps create a safe space for open and honest discussions.

- Stay focused on the topic at hand. While tangents can sometimes spark interesting ideas, let's aim to circle back to the main discussion, following each step of the workshops, to maintain relevance and get to the end of this first process of your Foresight journey.

- Be flexible and open-minded. Embrace uncertainty and varying viewpoints. Sometimes the most innovative solutions arise from unexpected angles. Let's keep our minds open to new possibilities.

- Remember, the goal is collective insight and foresight. Let's work together to explore and understand potential futures with curiosity, empathy, and a shared commitment to creating positive change.