

# Foreword

In an era marked by immediate crises and enduring threats, governments find themselves under intense scrutiny. Among the numerous pressing challenges they must confront are climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath, and geopolitical tension, such as Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Rapid advancements in artificial intelligence and unprecedented waves of migration add even more disruptive change. To meet these challenges, governments must be not only reactive, but proactive, visionary and forward-thinking.

Given the important role of strategic foresight in policymaking and resilience, the Government of Flanders has been taking steps to improve its capabilities in the area of strategic foresight. To take a more substantive leap forward, the government partnered with the OECD to make a full assessment of its strategic foresight system. The region aims to become a leader in future-oriented policymaking; it also coordinates regional multi-level partnerships in strategic foresight. Effective use of strategic foresight provides numerous advantages to governments. It enhances decision making with valuable insights into the future, expands the range of possibilities for action by challenging and reevaluating prevailing assumptions about the future and policymaking practices, and strengthens the legitimacy of policy decisions by engaging key stakeholders in an explicit exploration of expectations, biases and compromises relating to possible, plausible and desirable futures. But most of all, it makes current policies more robust and resilient in the long term. It will thus help the Government of Flanders both proactively respond to future challenges and seize opportunities in areas of strategic importance to the region, such as digitalisation, sustainable development, and industrial development.

This report outlines the main findings and recommendations of the assessment of the strategic foresight system of the Government of Flanders. The assessment relied on desktop analysis, semi-structured interviews and collaborative workshops conducted from October 2022 to June 2023. It is accompanied by a blueprint and roadmap to incorporate strategic foresight into the public administration of Flanders in the next five years.

This report is part of OECD's work on anticipatory governance that seeks to embed strategic foresight into governance processes and strategic decision making. Anticipatory governance enables diverse actors to work together to explore consequences and develop robust responses, ultimately guiding efforts to shape a more equitable and sustainable future. OECD is currently developing good practice principles in anticipatory governance to guide governments further in this work.



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