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**PLENARY SESSION 3: LEVERAGING LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS**

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**SPEAKING POINTS**

- For policies that work better and will be sustainable tomorrow, we must ensure that they are informed by scientific evidence. Providing scientific evidence needs to be systematic and done through defined pathways within the policy-making cycle.
- A robust science-for-policy ecosystem:
  - would ensure that the scientific evidence is there when decision makers need it,
  - will provide unbiased, future-proof and socially sensitive evaluation of the impact of policy proposals and their implementation, thus helping to devise solutions that work
  - would help distinguish facts from politics in the public debate
- But we have to deliver policies that not only work but that citizens also want. If the values on the basis of which we shape policies do not correspond to the values of citizens, then the futures we are constructing with these policies cannot be resilient or sustainable.
- In the quicksands of misinformation, it is easy to fall into the trap of thinking that every time citizens oppose something we - policymakers, do, they are simply misinformed and that we have to “correct” them.
- So how can we distinguish misinformed opinions from legitimately different takes on the same trustworthy information?
- In the JRC, we have brought together interdisciplinary insights from the social and behavioural sciences and looked in-depth into the values and identities that shape the political process. The scientific evidence points to a few assertions which we should bear in mind when devising policies:

- On the issues people care about the most (the most contested policy issues), the values stemming from their social groups automatically colour their views and no evidence or rational argumentation is able to overturn them. That means that from the same information, different people would draw completely different conclusions based on their values.
  - Values are highly stable at individual level. But group values shift because of societal and political developments and they affect personal values. Personal values are, of course, linked to political attitudes. But when parties change their positions, citizens partially change their political attitudes while their personal values stay the same.
  - The conclusion is that evidence-informed policy making by itself would not be enough to convince people that the policies we devise are good, i.e. that they are in accordance with their political views and values. Policy-making must also be more participatory - from the very beginning of the policy-making cycle.
- A deliberative democracy establishes legitimate spaces for ordinary citizens to be involved in policy and decision making – systematically, not only in times of elections and referenda.
  - Policymaking must also be forward-looking and anticipatory. To address the “wicked” problems facing us we must be better prepared than when the COVID pandemic hit us or when Russia started a war of aggression in Ukraine.
  - Strategic foresight can help us to anticipate profound changes and to prepare and better shape policies and decisions. Strategic foresight provides the safe space to think the unthinkable. This looking ahead gives us the agency to prepare, adapt and prevent some of the most undesirable outcomes.
  - 4 years ago, in the European Commission, strategic foresight was included in the portfolio of Vice President Sefcovic. Since then strategic foresight has become embedded at various levels of decision making in the European Commission and across the EU institutions.
  - Horizon scanning - detecting signals of change and emerging trends and making sense of their possible evolution, is a critical capacity. For example:
    - In the coming decades, there is a possible crisis over sand supply - the 2nd most used resource after water. Modelling exercises show a 45% increase in global sand use for the construction sector from 2020 to 2060. However, the United National Environment Programme (UNEP) released a report in April last year warning that current extraction of sand exceeds the replenishment rates, leading to shortages, socio-economic conflicts and environmental degradation.
    - Lunar economy: lunar economy encompasses all general economic activity associated with the production, use, and exchange of lunar resources on the Moon’s surface, in lunar orbit and on Earth and it has been estimated that it will be worth 170 billion USD by 2040,
  - The monitoring and analysis of megatrends - trends that are visible today and are expected to have a significant impact in the years to come (like aggravating resource

scarcity, continuing urbanisation or increasing demographic imbalances) must be a routine exercise embedded in the policy-making processes in an explicit manner if the policies we devise are to be future-proof.

- Developing foresight scenarios and applying them to stress test policies and inform long-term strategies is another exercise which can inform more sustainable and resilient policies.
  
- For all this to be applied, policymakers at different levels of government need to be equipped with the necessary skills:
  - To embed foresight in the policy cycle, policymakers must be “futures literate” – they must have the competences to spot change, to understand change and to direct change.
  - To provide evidence for informed policymaking, scientists must have the skills to link the dots, formulate the issues and communicate the relevant science to policymakers.
  - To assess the impact our policy proposals would have in the future we need models which are based on crosscutting social criteria and on foresight considerations.
  
- To conclude: to ensure that the policies we bring forward are resilient and sustainable, we must:
  - create and maintain robust science-for-policy ecosystems,
  - increase citizen engagement at all stages of the policymaking cycle
  - ensure foresight analysis within the strategic thinking
  - provide for the necessary skills across the board to support all this.

*A video of the speech:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lcnKzIja8eA&list=PLafTseM15bmGXfMyNS2B41zIF24U8cX6h&index=24>