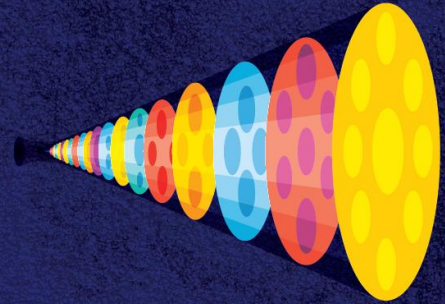


## Youth4Foresight Toolkit

OCTOBER 2024



Youth4Foresight Toolkit (OCTOBER 2024) - INTPA FORESIGHT HUB NETWORKS BUILDER

### Backcasting – Taking Action

**Purpose:** Reflect and collect learnings from the foresight journey by using backcasting to identify how future goals can be achieved, working backward from a desirable future state.

**Time taken:** 90 - 110 minutes

**Participants:** This tool can be used individually or as part of a thematic committee or whole youth advisory structure.

**Difficulty level:** Medium

**What comes before:** Participants may have already developed a shared vision of the future, if not, we will dedicate time during the workshop to do so.

**What comes after:** This tool will help you connect your foresight learnings to practical actions, identifying immediate steps to bring your desired future to life. Participants will leave with a concrete action plan to implement in their youth advisory work going forward.

**Videos:** [Introduction to foresight](#), [Video Futures Wheel](#)

**Group sizes:** Groups of 3-8 people

**Facilitation:** The exercise can be facilitated by YFP and/or experts/technical assistants (in which case the “Why use this tool?” and “Instructions” parts can be shared with the participants beforehand). However, it is a good exercise for members to start engaging the self-facilitation of an easy Foresight exercise by reading this whole document.

### Why use this tool?

Having completed the foresight journey, it's time to transform vision into action. Backcasting helps you work backward from the future you have envisioned, identifying the actions and milestones that will bring that future into reality. This method ensures that the insights gained are not just theoretical but are translated into real-world applications that can drive change. It will help identify concrete actions and milestones required to achieve that future.

## Instructions

### Working Backward from the Future (50 – 60 minutes)

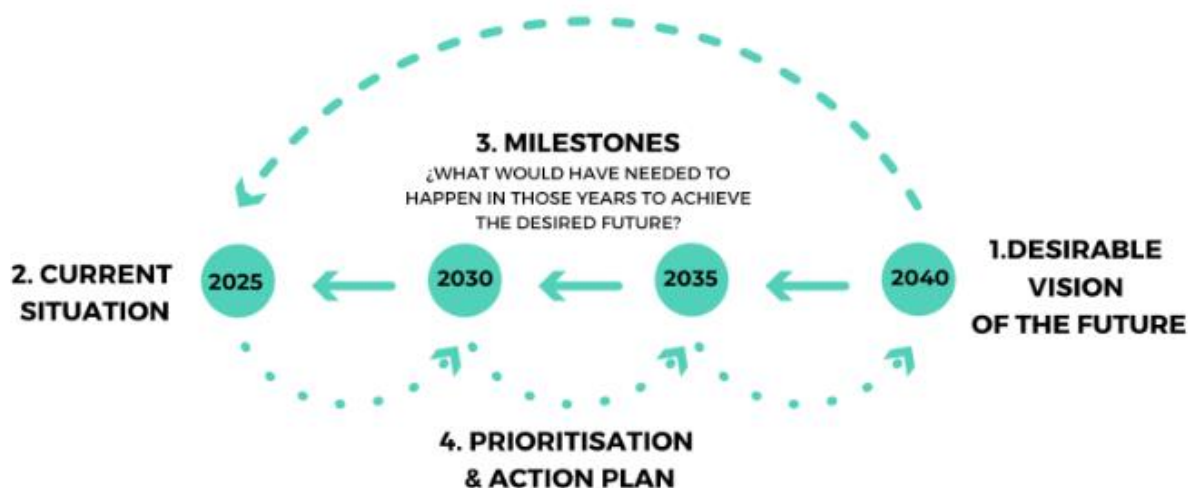
**Step 1:** Begin by revisiting the future vision already created or by agreeing on a shared **desirable vision of the future** on the topic that you are exploring.

**Step 2:** Identify the baseline, what is the **current situation** with the opportunities and challenges.

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- Identify any potential barriers or challenges to achieve our desirable future and discuss potential strategies to overcome them.
- Explore the opportunities that exist now, such as resources, partnerships, or skills that could be leveraged to advance the goals and overcome challenges.
- Questions to guide this step:
  - What barriers might we face, and how can we mitigate them?
  - What opportunities and resources can we take advantage of right now?
  - What support or partnerships can help us succeed?

**Step 3:** Based on the desirable vision of the future, now let's travel again to the future. Identify the **key milestones** that were achieved from the future to the present to realising this desirable future. Trace backward from the future vision step-by-step, discussing and documenting the most significant decisions, actions, or interventions that made the future possible.

- Questions to guide this step:
  - What were the most critical actions taken that led to the success of the youth advisory structure?
  - What projects or initiatives were undertaken along the way?
  - What partnerships, resources, or strategies were essential for moving forward?



### Step 4: Prioritisation and Action Planning (30 – 40 minutes)

- **Prioritisation.** Focus on the present day. Think about the first steps that can be taken now to set the youth advisory structure on the path to achieving the future vision.

Questions to guide this step:

- What immediate actions can we take today to move toward our envisioned future?
- How can we use the insights gained from the foresight journey to inform these actions?
- What quick wins or small projects could give momentum to the larger goals?

- **Action Planning.** Based on the backcasting exercise, create a practical action plan with specific next steps, responsibilities, and timelines. Each participant or group can contribute their thoughts on how to begin moving forward immediately.

Questions to guide this step:

- What are the specific actions we can take in the next 1-3 months to advance our goals?
- Who will be responsible for each action, and what is the realistic timeline for completion?

## Preparing for the workshop

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This tool is flexible and can be tailored to your group's needs. It can be used as part of an in-person or virtual workshop, or even completed individually. Once the future vision is agreed, the focus will be on working backward from that vision to identify practical actions in the present.

### Steps to Prepare:

1. **Decide on the Format:**  
Determine whether the session will be conducted as an in-person workshop, virtual workshop, or as a questionnaire. Ensure participants are aware of the backcasting focus.
2. **Group Participants (If Workshop-Based):**  
For workshops, split participants into small groups to discuss and collaborate. Ensure each group has access to materials for brainstorming and documenting their discussions (e.g., flipchart paper, pens, or an online collaborative tool like Miro for virtual settings).
3. **Provide Future Vision Recap (Optional):**  
If the participants already have an agreed shared future vision, from previous foresight exercises, consider giving participants a brief recap of this future vision. This will help them focus on the milestones and actions needed to reach that vision.
4. **Distribute Key Questions in Advance (If applicable):**  
Sharing the key questions ahead of time can allow participants to reflect individually before the session. This will help them arrive prepared and ready to contribute to group discussions.
5. **Ensure Time for Whole-Group Sharing:**  
After small group discussions, dedicate time at the end of the session for a whole-group reflection. Each group or individual should share their action plans and commitments to bring the vision closer to reality.

### Additional Preparation Tips:

- **For an In-Person Workshop:**
  - Gather materials such as flipchart paper, markers, and post-it notes.
  - If possible, send the reflection questions to participants in advance to encourage pre-workshop reflection.
- **For a Virtual Workshop:**
  - Use an online collaboration tool (e.g., Miro or Google Docs) to help participants record their backcasting steps during group discussions.
  - Break participants into small virtual groups to discuss each step and take notes collaboratively.
- **As a Questionnaire:**
  - You can create a digital or printed questionnaire that guides participants through the backcasting process. Have participants submit their responses for follow-up.
  - Consider providing an anonymous summary of responses to the group, and later hold a discussion based on the collected insights.

## Facilitator tips

- Take care in how participants pick the trends or signals of change to work with in stage 1. The goal is to find ideas about the future that are diverse enough to stretch the thinking about the topic while still relevant to the broader systems of the youth advisory position in an EU Delegation.
- In the primary and secondary consequences, invite participants to try to imagine what would happen if the seeds at the center of the circle grow to their full potential.
- The three signals can be separate brainstormers and do not have to describe one coherent world. Ideas in the brainstorm might connect to one another, but might also be contradictory, this is fine as we don't know how the future will play out.
- Prompt participants to think about many different types of impact that can arise from a signal or trend. For example, a technological trend could have political, social, technological, economic, or even environmental impacts!

## Suggested exercise timings

Please note that you can expand the timings to suit your group but always try to keep your session less than 3 hrs.

<b>Introducing the activity</b>	10 minutes
<b>Step 1:</b> Revising and agreeing on the future vision (if needed)	10 minutes
<b>Step 2:</b> Current situation	20-25 minutes
<b>Step 3:</b> Key milestones (working backward from the future)	20-25 minutes
<b>Step 4:</b> Prioritisation and action planning	30-40 minutes
<b>Session close</b>	10 minutes

## Conclusion

This version of the tool focuses on turning the foresight journey into actionable steps by using backcasting. Participants will leave with a clear understanding of the actions needed to move toward their desired future, along with a practical plan for immediate implementation.

Congratulations! You completed your initial foresight journey. We hope you have been inspired to learn more about foresight and help others to go through the same experience, at EU Delegation-level, at your organisation- or network- level and at your community-level. And remember, this is only the beginning of a never-ending journey that helps us better understand our present and navigate the futures so we can co-create better tomorrows for all!

Thank you for engaging with this toolkit, and please do share your experiences with the INTPA Foresight Community of Practitioners ([INTPA-PA01-FORESIGHT@ec.europa.eu](mailto:INTPA-PA01-FORESIGHT@ec.europa.eu)) as we continue to refine and improve the toolkit for future youth advisory structures.