

Anticipatory science policies need to embrace the emerging trends in R&I that the study “Strategic Foresight in the Western Balkans: Recovery on the Horizon” identified. Based on these signals of change, experts from the region recommend to further strengthen the scientific ecosystem in the Western Balkans in order to avert undesirable aspects of the scenarios of the future accordingly:



1. Foster National Innovation Systems in the Western Balkans

Expected outcome

Knowledge-based economies & sustainable economic growth

Potential implementation activities

- In a quadruple helix dialogue, stakeholders can define the thematic development and transformation instruments in the field of innovation, technology transfer and Smart Specialisation.
- Jointly define the thematic development and transformation instruments in the field of innovation, technology transfer and Smart Specialisation, involving the stakeholders in a quadruple helix dialogue.
- Address legal gaps at the national level to improve the legal basis for innovation activities.
- An appropriate balance between competitive projects and institutional funding would be a favourable approach for systems where demand for R&D is still limited.
- In order to protect new technical solutions, researchers and companies in the Western Balkans should promote a culture of intellectual property protection, initiating protection procedures prior to market release or other public availability.



2. Further develop Human Capital

Expected outcome

Well-trained students and experts that effectively respond to market developments, diverse educational formats, and networks with the diaspora

Potential implementation activities

- Build on existing good practice of dual education in the region.
- Policy makers, academia and industry should ensure a continuous dialogue, including with invited experts (OECD, EU, etc.) to discuss framework conditions, learning methods and human capital development.
- Establish a Regional Innovation Academy, which aims to provide entrepreneurs and innovators with essential skills to bring creative research ideas to the market, with a series of training focused on disruptive fields, support from foreign experts on funding and legal issues, and the opportunity to further strengthen innovation networks in the Western Balkans.
- Stimulate regional exchange programmes between young researchers and innovators with industry and academia, allowing them to acquire valuable innovation and strategies and skills.



3. Establish a strategic R&I cooperation platform for industry and academia

Expected outcome

The adoption of a legal framework that supports collaboration between industry and academia, facilitating sustainable networks that increase private investments in R&D and initiate early-stage venture capital funds for disruptive industries

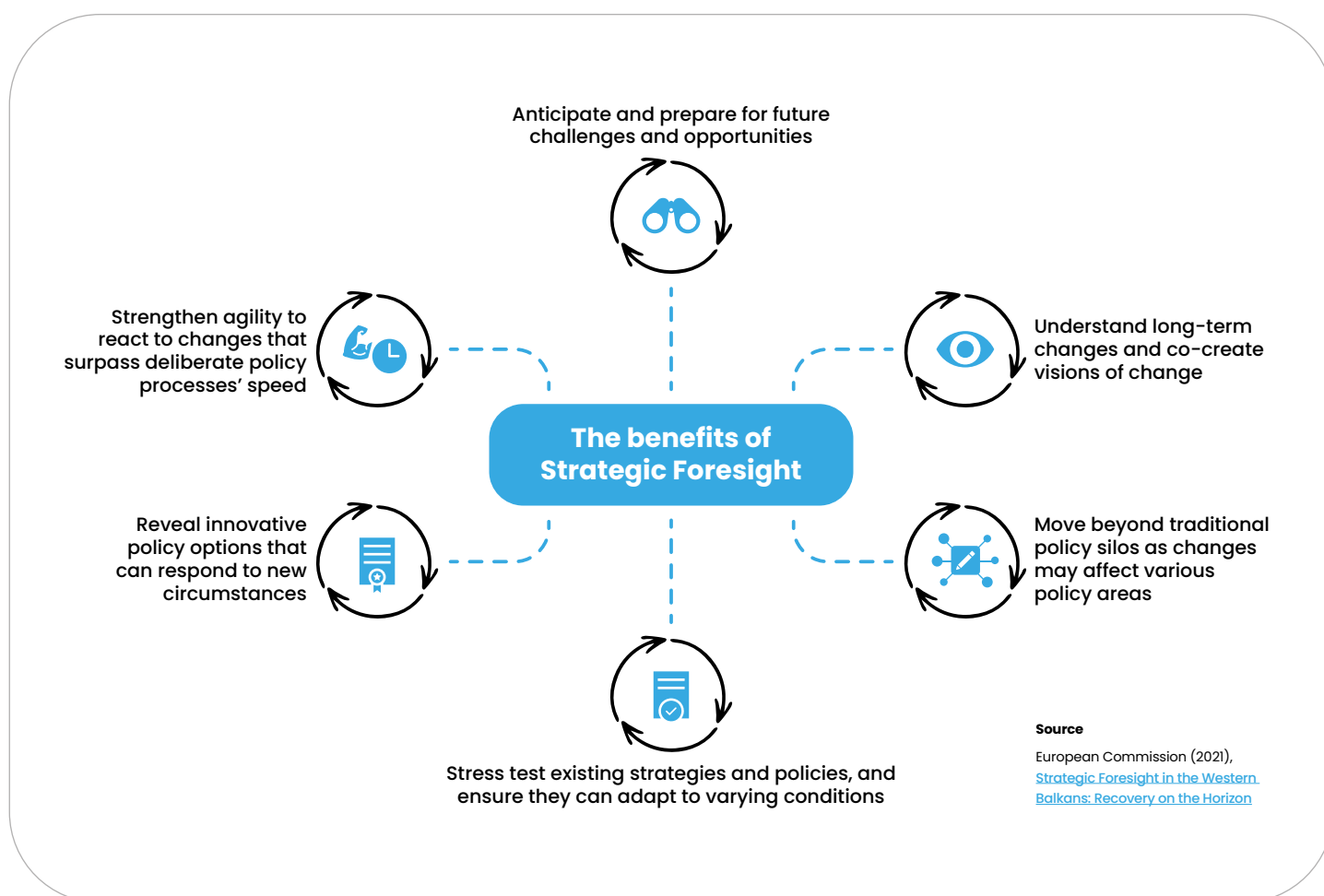
Potential implementation activities

- Organise serial events at a regional level that facilitate the quadruple helix interaction to promote the mutual understanding of R&D collaboration, resource sharing and concrete approaches for joint action through training, meetings, panel discussions and workshops.
- Establish a networking initiative to map and foster a continuous exchange between the different R&I platforms existing in the region, identify gaps and coordinate joint projects to learn from each other.
- Initiate effective funding instruments for start-ups and SMEs in the region. The establishment of dedicated programmes could be supported by regular foresight exercises.

What is Strategic Foresight?

Strategic Foresight helps to prepare for the unexpected. It uses collective intelligence in a structured and systematic way to anticipate developments and better prepare for change. Foresight is not about predicting the future but about exploring different plausible futures that could emerge and the opportunities and challenges they present.

Strategic Foresight is a methodology that helps governments and organisations to identify, anticipate and adapt to future changes, challenges and opportunities. It provides a structured framework for analysing current trends, identifying potential future scenarios and developing strategies to prepare for them.



How is the POLICY ANSWERS project using Strategic Foresight?

Prevailing challenges in the Western Balkans show that the orthodox approaches of the past to preparing for the future have not always produced the desired results. Translating ambitious political agendas and goals into concrete results, therefore, requires new, innovative approaches.

The POLICY ANSWERS team facilitated a Foresight Workshop on Anticipatory Science Advice, where selected experts from the region exchanged visions and defined joint priorities for R&I. The workshop was based on the three co-created scenarios of the study [Strategic Foresight in the Western Balkans: Recovery on the Horizon](#), which are entitled "Joining the Common Market", "Looking beyond EU Borders", and "Putting Business First". The summary of the recommendations for R&I of the future reflects the priorities of the participants and was elaborated during a workshop in Podgorica in March 2023.

