Report

- Date and time: 7 December 2020, 16:00 - 17:30
- Title of the session: **FuturGov engagement game**
- Format: Ideas Lab
- Facilitators: **Lucia Vesnic-Alujevic** (Policy analyst and researcher, European Commission /JRC/), **Jennifer-Ellen Rudkin** (Policy analyst and designer, European Commission /JRC/), **Eckhard Stoermer** (Foresight researcher, European Commission /JRC/)

Main topics discussed

In this session, participants played a board game where they had to imagine they lived in Europe in 2030 and that the climate fight is still the all-consuming battle of the era. Member States have increasingly adopted interventionist policies to curb emissions. This has led to the nationalisation of media and a threat to free speech.

Three policies were presented to the players:
1. A CO_2 label for all retail goods to inform consumers about the supply chain of products
2. A ban on government subsidies for non-organic farming and livestock
3. A quota on beef consumption

Key messages from each player

Participants took up the roles of:
1. A centre-left MEP who is concerned about the freedom of the press
2. A fact-based robot humanoid that primarily cares about the environment
3. A journalist who seeks to safeguard the interests of society and the worse off
4. An AI extended brain that draws conclusions based on social media activity
5. A vegetarian, self-sufficient citizen who does not trust the media

Solutions proposed

Policy 1: CO_2 label (QR code on products)

Participants acknowledged the positive aspects of keeping consumers informed about retail goods. Nevertheless, the MEP proposed an amendment to ensure that the policy would be phased in following a two-step approach. The law would apply to processed goods first, and only later would the possibility of extending the scope of the CO_2 label be considered.

The journalist, the humanoid robot and the self-sufficient citizen ended up supporting the amendment. However, the latter expressed concern about those who are not able to read QR codes

Policy 2: Ban on government subsidies for non-organic farming and livestock

At first, the policy was only supported by the journalist. The MEP was worried whether this measure could be effectively implemented if enforced immediately. As a result, the self-sufficient citizen proposed an amendment according to which the policy would be implemented over time. In addition, the journalist proposed a second amendment that would guarantee that the worse off could still afford food if prices were to increase. Both amendments were supported by all, except for the humanoid robot, which argued that it would not benefit its native Finland. Nevertheless, the policy and its amendments passed.

Policy 3: Beef quotas

Participants did not support this policy. The MEP and the AI extended brain argued that prohibition had not worked in the past. The vegetarian self-sufficient citizen argued that people should be free to eat whatever they like. The policy was not approved.

Take-away messages

Participants effectively drew on each other's contributions to make more informed decisions. The AI extended brain provided data regarding public support for different measures, which was quite useful. The journalist's concerns for the worse off also convinced the others to adopt certain amendments. And lastly, the MEP's experience with public policy enabled players to understand that policies are often more effective if phased in over time.