

Future-ready cities: foresight for climate resilience

Wednesday 28 October 2026, 11:30–13:00 – Barcelona

In collaboration with the Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies (CIFS)

Executive summary

Eurocities political leaders have expressed interest in doing more together on climate and in strengthening their capacity to anticipate future challenges, including during discussions at the Executive Committee in Oslo. This session in Barcelona is an opportunity to follow up on that request in a political setting, using strategic foresight to explore how cities can better prepare for future climate scenarios.

Cities are already dealing with the effects of climate change. Heatwaves, floods, droughts, water stress, pressure on energy systems, impacts on public health and damage to infrastructure are becoming part of the everyday reality of city governments. At the same time, climate action is becoming more complex politically. Cities need to reduce emissions, adapt infrastructure, protect vulnerable residents, mobilise investment, maintain public support and respond to emergencies.

The session will use strategic foresight to explore how climate risks may evolve over the next 10 to 20 years, what these changes could mean for city governments, and what capacities cities may need to be better prepared. Strategic foresight is a practical approach that helps governments and decision-makers think systematically about different possible futures and use that reflection to inform decisions today. It is not about predicting the future, but about preparing for uncertainty and testing whether current plans and assumptions are realistic.

The session will not be a general discussion about climate policy, nor a technical training on foresight. It will be a practical, discussion-based session for city leaders. Participants will work with different climate futures for cities and reflect on what these scenarios could mean for their policies, priorities and preparedness. The discussion will also explore how cities can maintain public support for climate action and adaptation, where cities can work together more effectively, and how Eurocities could support this cooperation.

The workshop will also build on the joint research between Eurocities and the Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies on strategic foresight capacities in European cities. Ahead of the session, cities are invited to complete a short survey ([link here](#)) on how they currently use foresight or long-term thinking in their administrations, what barriers they face, and what kind of support they may need.

1. What is strategic foresight? Why is it relevant for city governments, and for Eurocities?

Strategic foresight is a way for governments to think more systematically about the future and use that thinking to inform decisions in the present.

It starts from a simple idea: the future is uncertain, and there is not only one possible path ahead. Some developments can be anticipated, but others may evolve in unexpected ways or interact with each other in ways that are difficult to predict. Strategic foresight helps decision-makers look beyond

the immediate agenda and consider different plausible futures before choices need to be made under pressure.

For city governments, this is especially relevant. Many local decisions have long-term consequences. Infrastructure built today may still be in use in 2050. Urban planning decisions can shape exposure to heat or flooding for decades. Choices on housing, mobility, public space, energy systems or emergency preparedness can either reduce future vulnerability or create new risks. A city may already have a climate plan, heat plan or resilience strategy. Strategic foresight does not replace these plans. It helps test them against different possible futures.

For instance, what if extreme heat becomes a regular summer condition rather than an exceptional event? What if several climate risks happen at the same time, such as heatwaves, water shortages and pressure on electricity systems? What if climate impacts increase social inequalities between neighbourhoods? What if public budgets become more constrained at the same time as adaptation needs grow? What if citizens expect faster protection, but resist some of the changes needed to adapt public space, housing or mobility?

Working through these questions can help cities identify where they are well prepared, where assumptions may be too optimistic, and which decisions would be useful across several possible futures. It can also help political leaders discuss difficult choices before a crisis occurs.

In this sense, foresight is not an abstract exercise. It is a practical tool to support better preparedness, more resilient strategies and stronger political conversations about long-term choices.

2. Why this session?

Eurocities political leaders have expressed interest in doing more together on climate, including during discussions at the Executive Committee in Oslo. This session is an opportunity to follow up on that request in a political setting.

The aim is not to hold a general discussion about climate policy, nor a technical training on foresight. The aim is to use foresight methods to help political leaders explore how climate risks may evolve, what these changes could mean for city governments, and what kind of collective support cities may need.

The session will focus on questions such as: What climate risks will most affect our cities in the next 10–20 years? Are our current plans and assumptions still realistic? What do city governments need to be better prepared? How do we keep public support for climate action and adaptation? Where can cities work together more effectively, and how can Eurocities support this?

No prior knowledge of strategic foresight is required. The session will be practical and discussion-based.

The 90-minute workshop will combine a short introduction to the role of foresight in climate resilience with a brief presentation of initial findings from the Eurocities x CIFS research. Participants will then engage in an exercise exploring different climate futures for cities, followed by a discussion to reflect on what these scenarios could mean for their policies, priorities and preparedness. The session will conclude with a collective exchange on what kinds of support and cooperation cities may need from Eurocities to strengthen their capacity for climate resilience.

The discussion will contribute to three concrete outputs:

1. A clearer political understanding of how strategic foresight can help cities prepare for long-term climate risks and uncertainty.

2. A set of insights on climate futures, related policy implications, political challenges and the capacities cities may need to address over the next 10 to 20 years.
3. Input into the Eurocities x CIFS research on foresight capacities in European cities and possible future capacity-building activities for member cities.

Why your city's input matters

Ahead of the session, Eurocities and CIFS are mapping how Eurocities member cities currently work with strategic foresight.

The survey will help us understand which cities already use foresight or long-term thinking in their decision-making; how foresight is organised within city administrations; what skills, tools or institutional arrangements are in place; what barriers prevent cities from using foresight more systematically; what kind of support cities would find useful from Eurocities.

This input is important for two reasons. First, it will help inform the political discussion in Barcelona. Second, it will help Eurocities and CIFS understand whether there is demand for future capacity-building or peer-learning activities on strategic foresight, including in relation to climate resilience.

- Please complete the survey [here](#). Cities are encouraged to share the survey with the person or department best placed to respond, such as strategy, innovation, urban planning, resilience, digital transformation, policy coordination, or the mayor's office.