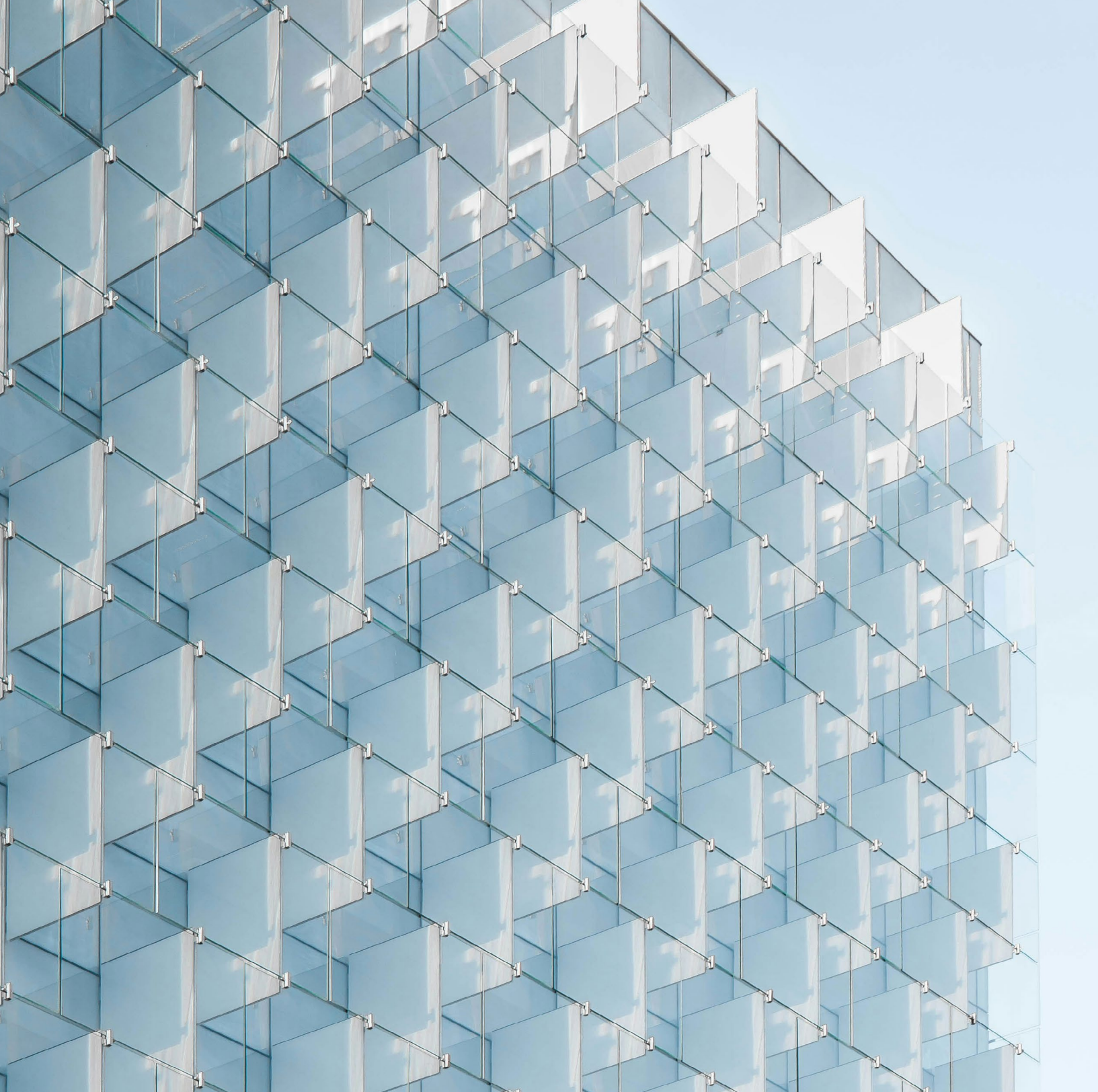




Futures Literacy Across Sectors: Practical Implications for Organisations

Lessons from a Study Visit in Norway

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1. Introduction

Across Europe, individuals and institutions encounter growing uncertainty linked to technological development, environmental change, demographic shifts, and evolving labour markets. For adults, these dynamics may limit access to opportunities and make it difficult to plan ahead with confidence. Educators and organisations working with adult learners increasingly seek methods that help people navigate this changing environment in an informed, reflective, and proactive way.

The Future Forward project was developed to address these needs. This report is part of a broader effort to strengthen the capacity of adult educators and learners to work with future-oriented skills, with a particular focus on Futures Literacy (FL), which is both a structured approach to thinking about the future and a trainable skill in using this approach to explore possibilities and make decisions today.



1.1. Purpose of the report

The aim of this publication is to provide a practical and accessible overview of how futures-oriented approaches are already being implemented in European contexts, and how similar practices may be adapted for use in Latvia and Poland. It is designed for educators, adult-learning professionals, public-sector staff, NGO practitioners, and other stakeholders interested in introducing Futures Literacy into their work.

The report aims to:

- present concrete examples of futures methodologies in action across different sectors,
- demonstrate their relevance for adult learning and organisational development,
- outline conditions that support successful implementation, and
- offer guidance for adapting these approaches to local contexts in Central and Eastern Europe.

A central element for creating this guide was a study visit to Bergen, Norway, where representatives from Poland and Latvia spent several days learning from organisations that already use futures-informed approaches in their work.

Over the course of three days, the group observed and spoke with teams in four different settings—each with its own mission, audience, and challenges, yet all united by the belief that imagining alternative futures can strengthen communities today.

At **Åsane Kulturhus**, a cultural centre, futures tools help the institution reimagine what a cultural hub can be. Staff use methods that invite residents to participate, dream, and reshape the centre's role in the neighbourhood. The result is a more open, responsive and community-driven space, where the future is something co-created, not simply planned by authorities.

At **Fyllingsdalen Upper Secondary School**, futures thinking informs a week of interdisciplinary learning focused on sustainable development. Students explore possible futures and consider their own role in shaping them.

At **NLA University College**, futures-inspired principles are presented in an academic workshop that blends social sciences, natural sciences and literature. The workshop helps students view the world through multiple lenses, encouraging them to imagine futures that go beyond the predictable and familiar.

Finally, at the **Vestland County Council's Department of Education**, futures methodologies support policy teams in navigating complex social challenges. Learning to question assumptions and imagine alternative outcomes helps policymakers design more resilient and inclusive educational strategies.

Learning from institutions that have already tested futures methodologies offers two main advantages. First, it provides concrete examples of how abstract concepts translate into operational activities, decision-making processes, or educational programmes. This is especially valuable for educators and practitioners who may be interested in futures thinking but are unsure how to begin.

Second, cross-border exchange highlights differences in organisational cultures, resources, and policy environments. Because Latvia and Poland differ from Norway in administrative structures, community dynamics and levels of experience with FL, it is essential to identify which elements are transferable and which require adaptation.

Alongside the study visit and the cases presented in this chapter, the development of this report was based on a review of academic and grey literature on Futures Literacy and futures-oriented approaches. This review provided a broader analytical context for understanding how such methodologies are discussed, justified, and implemented across different fields. It also supported the identification of additional European case studies beyond Bergen, helping to situate the examples described here within a wider landscape of existing practice.

1.2. Structure of the report

The report begins with an overview of futures methodologies, focusing particularly on Futures Literacy and the Futures Literacy Laboratory approach. This section introduces key concepts, an overview of the methodology and the benefits of applying it on individual, organisational, or community/ policy level. Further, practical applications of futures thinking are described across five sectors: public administration, education, culture, NGOs and civic engagement, and the private sector. These examples include insights from the study visit to Norway as well as other European cases. The final chapter offers recommendations for adapting futures-oriented practices to the Latvian and Polish contexts.



1.3. About the project

This report is one of the outputs of the project “Future Forward. Futures-Inspired Educational Resources for Adult Learners’ Empowerment” financed by the Erasmus+ programme. The partnership involves organisations from Latvia (MIHI), Poland (Center for Social and Economic Research - CASE) and Norway (Fremtenkt). The project focuses on supporting adult learners, particularly those in rural areas or with migration experience, by introducing future-oriented competences that can help them navigate uncertainty and make informed decisions. It also aims to strengthen the capacity of educators to integrate futures methodologies into their work, enabling long-term and sustainable use of these approaches in local communities.

The project combines several elements: a study visit, consultations with learners and educators, a train-the-trainers programme, the creation of ready-to-use futures scenarios, and two publications, including this review. Together, these components build a foundation for introducing Futures Literacy more broadly into adult learning environments in Latvia and Poland.

2. What is Futures Literacy and Futures Literacy Laboratory?

2.1. Introduction to Futures Methodologies

When we think about the future, we tend to see it as something that is predetermined, and our task is to predict it, plan for it, and prepare ourselves accordingly. This fixed vision of the future seems so ingrained in our daily lives and culture that we treat it as a fact most of the time. Futures thinking starts from the assumption that this future does not really exist. Instead, futures thinking treats «the future» as a construction of our imagination, a set of ideas and images about what the future will be like. These ideas play a role in how we understand the world around us – and how we act. Therefore, our ideas about the future help shape what actually happens. Futures thinking encourages a shift from thinking about «what the future will bring» to asking a question: What do we want to bring with us into the future? In connection with this, the ability to explore and imagine different futures helps us to understand how we use the future in the present, and enables us to consciously expand the range of possibilities we consider and act upon.

Even with this approach, the future is inevitably uncertain. Futures thinking does not attempt to combat this uncertainty. Rather, by opening us up to complexity and uncertainty, cultivating an ability to “use the future” can change the way we understand and use human agency. This increased ability to appreciate complexity can enable us to create strategies that strengthen resilience, combining planning with creative spontaneity and balancing risk minimisation with the acceptance of uncertainty.

UNESCO calls this ability to ‘use the future’ Futures Literacy (FL). Together with other approaches to futures thinking, Futures Literacy allows us to question existing ways of thinking, step outside our comfort zone, and expand our imagination.

2.2. What is Futures Literacy?

FL is the ability to consciously ‘use the future’ to better understand the present. It uses our imagination to introduce yet non-existent futures into current ways of thinking and acting. Futures Literacy is not about predicting what will happen, but about becoming aware of how our ideas

about the future influence what we see and how we interpret the present. By imagining alternative, even radically different, futures, it creates a space for discovering new possibilities and ways of acting. Practising FL, for example, through Futures Literacy Laboratories (FLL, explained in detail below), helps us to recognise hidden assumptions, broaden our perspective and develop a creative approach to change.

People constantly ‘use the future’ in the present when making decisions and choosing the direction of their actions in anticipation of a given outcome. Even small children use simple forms of foresight, for example, expecting to be fed when they are hungry or tracking the movement of objects. These basic anticipatory abilities become the foundation for everyday decisions, such as bringing an umbrella when we expect rain on a cloudy day or planning our career or life path. Growing up can also be taken as an example. When observing a toddler, we automatically assume that they will start walking in the near future, and this idea guides how we understand their current behaviour. Such unconscious mechanisms of anticipation can be treated as built-in prediction systems that shape our perceptions and actions before we even begin to think about them consciously. Even though we are often unaware of it, using the future in this manner is an integral part of human agency in the present: it influences what we perceive, how we interpret situations, and how we choose between different possibilities.

A key element of FL is accepting that the future is unpredictable. We are not talking about predicting what it will look like, but about consciously using our imagination to improve our situation and way of living today. FI treats uncertainty as a resource, a source of novelty rather than a threat (UNESCO, 2018).



2.3. The Futures Literacy Laboratory (FLL) Methodology

The Futures Literacy Laboratory (FLL) was designed to develop FL. It is both a workshop method and a research tool for shaping the ability to consciously use the future. It focuses on understanding how people imagine the future and what hidden anticipatory assumptions influence this imagination. FLL was created to make these assumptions visible and then help participants question, deepen, or reformulate them. The starting point, according to the Head of Futures Literacy at UNESCO, Riel Miller, is the assumption that most people are ‘futures illiterate’ (UNESCO 2018, 35). This term is not pejorative; it does not refer to deliberate ignorance, but rather to people who use visions of the future daily but rarely think about where they come from and why we imagine them in a certain way. We treat the future as something obvious, as a natural part of planning, forecasting, or risk management. However, what we consider possible, probable, desirable, or inevitable is the result of our assumptions about how the world works, the pace of change, our agency or lack thereof, values, norms, and experiences. FLL serves to bring these assumptions to the surface, make them the subject of reflection, and then allow participants to experiment with other ways of ‘using the future.’ In this sense, FLL is not just a strategic workshop format, but a process which changes both the content of our ideas and our way of thinking about the future.

The aim of FLL is to create conditions in which participants can become aware of their own anticipatory assumptions, as most of them are invisible and unconscious. Examples of this include assumptions that education leads to better jobs, that tomorrow will be like today, and that certain outcomes are inevitable and others impossible. The workshop also allows participants to see how these assumptions influence decisions made in the present and how ideas about the future organise our actions: what we expect, what we prepare for, and what we want to avoid. By using FLL, participants can learn to use the future in different ways, not only in planning mode (what future they want) and forecasting mode (what future is likely), but also in exploring new things and possibilities. Changing their perspective can be done with the help of a ‘reframing scenario’. A reframing scenario is a description of a future that is neither necessarily likely nor desirable, but possible, and which challenges some of our assumptions about what the future will be like. With the help of reframing scenarios, participants can transcend existing limitations and discover new perspectives, expand their collective and individual imagination, and see new potential for action. FLL helps us understand that the future does not have to be a linear extension of the present, and that change and surprise can be creative resources. This allows us to strengthen our ability to cope with the uncertainty and complexity of our reality. When we know the assumptions behind

our choices, we can change or adjust them and make more informed and accurate decisions, supporting the flexibility and resilience of participants to change (UNESCO, 2018).

A Futures Literacy Laboratory consists of four main phases, but it is worth noting that each laboratory requires local adaptation to the topic, participants and group dynamics, duration, and the culture of the organisation. Each phase plays an important role and is based on experiential learning mechanisms.



Phase 1: Reveal

This is the first and crucial step, in which participants reveal their initial ideas about the future of a given topic. The two most-used framings are:

- The desired future – what do we **want** to happen?
- The probable future– what do we **think** will happen?

These two frames are useful because they reflect the dominant ways of thinking about the future: **planning** (based on hope and goals) and **preparing** (based on expectations and predictions).

Because we are used to thinking about what we want and what we expect, the Reveal phase serves as a low threshold entry point into the workshop. At the same time, it helps raise awareness that different frames of thinking lead to different images of the future. It also allows us to uncover hidden assumptions about what we consider possible, unchangeable, obvious or logical. This discovery phase is the starting point for further broadening our perspective in subsequent stages.

Phase 2: Reframe

This phase is central to the FLL methodology. Participants receive a **reframing scenario** describing a possible, though not necessarily desirable or probable, future. This scenario has been deliberately designed to:

- deviate from standard ideas about the future,
- challenge assumptions that participants take for granted,
- open up new possibilities,
- encourage mental experimentation.

The scenario serves as a cognitive tool designed to create cognitive dissonance among participants. It forces them to enter a mode of thinking that they rarely use: exploring what is possible, even if it seems non-intuitive or strange.

The reframing scenario acts as an intellectual catalyst that disrupts dominant thought patterns, and it provokes participants to question their assumptions and confront them with a different logic of using the future. Scenarios in FLL are not a forecast or a blueprint for the future; they allow participants to see how limited their perspective on planning and forecasting can be and enable them to break out standard thinking patterns and unleash their creativity. It is at this stage that participants begin to notice that the future can function as a cognitive tool, a way to reinterpret the present and our expectations.

Phase 3: Reflect

After experiencing two different ways of thinking about the future in the previous two phases, participants move on to the **sense-making stage**. At this stage, different images of the future can be compared, and participants can understand how the change in perspective has affected their thinking and emotions. It is at this point that participants should notice differences in the ways they 'use the future' and identify their own anticipatory assumptions. This should enable them to translate their experience into new insights about the present.

This is the stage where key 'aha moments' occur, when participants realise how much their thinking has been conditioned by invisible assumptions. Phase 3: Reflect can be conducted separately or woven into Phase 1: Discovering and Phase 2: Reframing, by asking participants during those phases about their experiences and feelings, whether 'probable' was easier or more difficult for them than 'desirable,' and how they feel about the perspective shift scenarios. Encouraging participants to talk about these differences helps illustrate the fact that everyone has their own approach to questions about the future.

Phase 4: Next Steps

This phase is often omitted in strictly research-based laboratories, but it is crucial if the goal is to translate findings into practice. In this phase, participants analyse what they can **do differently**, given their understanding of their anticipatory assumptions. They consider how new perspectives influence their perception of problems and opportunities, and what actions in the present might emerge from the laboratory experience. The goal is not simply to create an „action plan,” but a new logic for taking action, rooted in a newly acquired, deeper understanding of how to use the future.

Source: (Sundfør Sivertsen S., Nabben R., 2021).

In everyday life, we think about the future primarily in terms of „how to achieve what I want” or „how to prepare for what’s likely.” Scenarios allow us to move participants beyond this logic. Through them, we can enter a third mode, exploring possibilities. This mode is rarely used, yet crucial for developing Futures Literacy. By creating a future in a scenario that participants didn’t envision, yet one that is internally coherent and realistic in its logic, we open space for novelty and surprise. In turn, when a scenario disrupts something we consider immutable, it allows us to recognise our own anticipatory assumptions and what they are. By offering participants a safe space for experimentation in the form of a ready-made scenario for consideration, we remove the shackles of realistic ideas and allow them to think inside unfamiliar boxes, opening them to alternative ways of thinking. The primary goal of FLL is not to describe tomorrow, but to discover how today’s thinking about it is conditioned. The scenario, therefore, serves as an epistemological tool through which participants learn that images of the future are not predictions but constructs that can be used to better understand the world today (UNESCO, 2018).

2.4. Why Time Horizons Matter (10, 25 or 50 years)

As part of FLL, participants are given a time frame, a specific moment in the future that serves as a reference point for imagining a given topic. It is important to choose the right date for participants to think about, so that it is neither too close nor too distant. It can be a round date, such as 2050, but also a specific number of years from now, e.g., 50 years. The date cannot be too close in the future, limiting their space to freely imagine the future by perceiving it through personal and social forecasts and expectations of what it will look like and limiting their imagination by restric-

ting themselves to visions that seem likely to them from today's perspective. On the other hand, a future that is too distant from the participants' perspective may lead some people to disengage: either because they feel they can't imagine such a distant future, or because they fail to see why it should concern them. Based on the experience of the authors of the Futures Literacy Laboratory Handbook, the period between 2040 and 2050 works very well (Sundfør Sivertsen, Nabben, 2021). Of course, the perception of time is subjective, and each participant may perceive the provided time frame differently. For example, some people see 25 years as a short period of time and therefore do not foresee any significant changes. Others have no problem foreseeing huge changes in the same timeframe. There is no one right way to choose timeframes, but the choice can affect the way participants in an FLL think about the future. And not just because different people have different perceptions of the pace of change: People also tend to approach questions about the distant future in one of two ways: Some calculate how old they will be and use their own personal perspective as an anchor to think about the future. Others tend to view the future more impersonally, focusing on, for example, societal changes. In the research literature, this is spoken of as the difference between personal and collective mental time travel (see, e.g. Shrikanth, Szpunar & Szpunar, 2018). Being aware of these differences in how people think about the future can be helpful when facilitating an FLL. For example, if you want people to think about a distant future where they might not be alive, you can tell them explicitly to imagine a person who is their current age in that future.



2.5. Futures Methodologies and Thinking About the Future of Organisations / Cities / Countries / Individuals

A key strength of FLL is collective sense-making. In a properly designed process, participants jointly reveal their hidden assumptions about the future: what they consider possible, probable, or desirable. What was previously a tacit belief or „obviousness” becomes the subject of reflection and dialogue. This allows the group to recognise that different people use different „images of the future” to make decisions. Revealing these assumptions broadens the field of thought and enables richer, less formulaic decisions that are not limited by a single dominant narrative about the future.

At the individual level, Futures Literacy strengthens the sense of agency. Instead of reacting with fear or uncertainty, individuals learn to view the future as a space of possibilities, not threats. The ability to recognise one’s own perceptions of the future helps one better cope with uncertainty, make more informed life decisions, and plan flexibly. The future ceases to be something externally imposed and becomes a resource for reflection and action.

Futures Literacy methodologies also support strategic innovation and long-term thinking in organisations. Organisations often fall into „tunnel vision,” focusing solely on short-term goals, metrics, and risks. Futures Literacy helps break this pattern by enabling the exploration of alternative futures, including those that do not stem directly from current trends. This allows them to better prepare for change, identify new development directions, and avoid strategic surprises.

Futures Literacy also fosters the democratisation of future thinking in local communities and cities. Instead of leaving development visions solely to experts or decision-makers, Futures Literacy engages residents in the process of collectively envisioning alternative development paths. This approach strengthens a sense of shared responsibility and allows for better consideration of residents’ diverse needs, experiences, and values. The future of a community becomes the result of dialogue, not merely technocratic planning.

At the level of government and public policy, future thinking supports long-term resilience and sustainable development. Policies based solely on short-term time horizons often fail to address profound social, technological, or climate transformations. Futures Literacy enables better management of systemic transitions, such as energy transition, demographic changes, or the future of the labour market. A country that can consciously „embrace the future” is better prepared for uncertainty and can design long-term policy plans that are resilient to potential challenges (UNESCO, 2018).

3. Practical implications of FL in different contexts

3.1. Public Administration

Why is futures methodology relevant for this sector?

Public administrations are expected to deliver stability, fairness, and long-term value in a world that feels anything but stable. Governments must make choices today that will still matter years (sometimes decades) into the future. Yet the environment in which these decisions unfold is increasingly shaped by rapid technological shifts, global crises, demographic transitions, and unexpected disruptions. In this context, traditional planning tools often fall short. Futures methodology, including Futures Literacy, offers public institutions a practical and necessary way to navigate uncertainty with confidence, creativity, and responsibility.

At its core, futures methodology helps governments move from reacting to change toward anticipating and shaping it. As the UK Government Office for Science (2025) highlights, policies designed purely around today's conditions frequently unravel when circumstances shift. By contrast, futures tools, such as horizon scanning, scenario exploration, and trend mapping, encourage policymakers to consider several plausible futures rather than betting on a single prediction. This simple shift helps reveal blind spots, stress-test strategies, and highlight opportunities that may otherwise remain invisible.

Public administration carries a special responsibility: policy decisions affect generations. Washington (2023) argues that governments need the ability to “take care of tomorrow” by building policy systems that can handle long-term risks as well as short-term pressures. Futures thinking strengthens this caretaking role. It pushes officials to ask not only “What is likely?” but also “What might happen?”, “What do we want to happen?”, and “How do we prepare for different possibilities?” These questions help ensure that public decisions remain robust and relevant even as society evolves.

The Case of Vestland Council, Norway

Vestland County's Futures Literacy work was initiated by practical concerns. Leaders of the county administration face several concurrent shifts: changes in demography, shortages of workforce and skills in key areas such as teachers, healthcare and industry, climate-related pressures, rapid technological change, and the general challenge of handling uncertainty. These issues affect multiple departments and make long-term planning more difficult. Futures Literacy was introduced as a way to address these questions more systematically.

The process began with leaders in the county administration. Their involvement focused on discussing long-term developments and recognising that many of the challenges they faced were shared across the institution. Workshops led by the non-profit futures agency Fremtenkt gave leaders the opportunity to talk openly about what was changing in their region and why, and to consider how their assumptions about the future influenced their decisions.

From there, the work moved into the Department of Education and Training. This department oversees upper secondary education, vocational training, follow-up services, and school development across 42 public upper secondary schools with more than 21,000 pupils and around 6,500 apprentices. All department staff took part in a two-day workshop led by Fremtenkt exploring received and possible futures for upper secondary education in Vestland. These sessions supported more coordinated conversations and helped reduce silos, as participants from different parts of the county education administration could work with the same questions and concerns.

Futures Literacy activities then reached schools directly, in the form of a two-day Futures Literacy Lab involving 300 school leaders from all the upper secondary schools in Vestland. This lab, also led by Fremtenkt, explored the topic of education and formation (*bildung*) in the future, and allowed principals, department heads, administrative management and other leaders to share visions of the future of education and challenge each other's assumptions about how testing, teaching and administrative support can facilitate learning not just in the future, but for the future, today.

The national core curriculum provided a clear frame of reference in this work. It sets out a dual mission for schooling, education and formation, along with six core values: human dignity, identity and cultural diversity, critical thinking and ethical awareness, creativity and exploration, respect for nature and the environment, and democracy and participation. It also highlights three interdisciplinary topics, health and life skills, democracy and citizenship, and sustainable development. These values, skills, and topics offered a shared basis for discussing what kind of future Vestland's schools should prepare pupils for.

The county's next potential step is to expand the work by offering Futures Literacy training to more school staff, including teachers. This will enable more consistent use of the approach across schools and support continued collaboration across different levels of the education system.

Source: own analysis based on a study visit.

Beyond strategic thinking, Futures Literacy enriches the evidence base of policymaking. Washington (2022) emphasises that good policy is built on more than data and past experience. It also requires insight, imagination, and the ability to work with uncertainty. Foresight becomes part of a broader policy “infrastructure” that supports quality advice. It complements evaluation, lived experience, stakeholder insights, and analytical methods. When futures tools are integrated into everyday policy work, officials can better frame problems, identify emerging issues early, and design interventions that adapt over time.

Crucially, futures approaches are also collaborative and democratic. They help open conversations across government agencies, sectors, experts, and communities. The UK Government Office for Science (2025) notes that participatory futures techniques bring diverse perspectives into the room, supporting richer debates about what kinds of futures people want—and want to avoid. This is especially important as public institutions seek to regain trust and ensure that policymaking reflects real societal needs.

UNESCO (2022) takes this even further by describing Futures Literacy as a capability for everyone, not just specialists. Futures Literacy helps individuals and organisations understand how they imagine the future and how those assumptions influence what they pay attention to today. By learning to challenge habitual ways of thinking, public servants can become more innovative and more open to alternative pathways. This kind of cognitive flexibility is invaluable in a world where yesterday’s solutions rarely work for tomorrow’s challenges.

Futures methodology matters for public administration because it equips governments to operate with greater clarity, resilience, and purpose. It encourages curiosity about change rather than fear of it. It broadens the evidence base, improves the quality of strategic choices, and strengthens the connection between public policy and public values. Most importantly, it empowers institutions not just to prepare for the future but to actively shape it for the benefit of the communities they serve.



The Case of Rybnik, Poland

Rybnik's strategy process shows how future-oriented methods can become a practical and meaningful part of shaping a city's long-term direction. Rybnik, like many medium-sized industrial cities in Southern Poland, is facing structural change: an ageing population, the transformation of traditional industries, increasing pressure to attract and retain younger residents, and growing uncertainty about how automation, digitalisation, and climate transition will affect local employment. The future of work is therefore closely linked to the city's social cohesion, economic resilience, and overall quality of life.

During the design process, the municipality launched an open, anonymous survey inviting residents, entrepreneurs, and local organisations to reflect on the future of the city. It encouraged people to speak freely about the opportunities they see, concerns they hold, and the kind of Rybnik they hope future generations will inherit.

To complement this wide public perspective, the city organised a Futures Literacy Lab titled "Rybnik w pracy 2050" (eng. Rybnik at Work 2050). The Lab was designed for entrepreneurs, employers, educators, labour-market intermediaries, and local development practitioners. Bringing these groups together created a shared space for dialogue between those who design policies, those who create jobs, and those who support workforce development.

The workshop focused on the future of work, but its influence extended far beyond the labour market. Participants explored how work, skills, and workplaces might evolve, and how these shifts could reshape life in Rybnik by 2050. The Lab was not about forecasting. Instead, it encouraged people to question their assumptions, imagine alternative scenarios, and experiment with perspectives they might not normally consider. This creative, sometimes surprising process expanded the city's understanding of what a resilient and attractive Rybnik could look like in the long term.

Both activities fed directly into the formal strategy-making process. Insights from the survey and workshop informed the creation of several long-term scenarios, helping the city examine different development paths and compare realistic futures with the preferred vision that emerged through public conversations. These reflections supported the identification of key challenges, strategic priorities, and development goals up to 2030, as well as a shared direction for 2050.

Source: (4CF, 2020a; 4CF, 2020b).

Implications of other organisations, lessons learned, points for inspiration

Administrations need approaches that help them work with uncertainty, broaden their understanding of emerging developments, and involve more perspectives in shaping long-term direction. Futures Literacy responds to this need by widening how organisations gather and interpret evidence, by encouraging reflection on their assumptions, and by supporting more flexible and adaptive policy planning.

The examples from Vestland and Rybnik show how these ideas translate into practice. In both cases, Futures Literacy was introduced to address specific issues: demographic change, shifts in skill requirements, expectations of public services, and the need for clear long-term strategies. This grounding in concrete issues made futures methods immediately relevant to the organisations involved. Instead of abstract exercises, Futures Literacy became part of ongoing conversations about how to organise services, how to coordinate across units, and how to work with communities.

A central insight from both cases is the importance of leadership involvement. Futures Literacy gives an opportunity where long-term concerns can become more tangible without being overshadowed by preexisting assumptions. In Vestland, beginning with senior leaders, they created space for open conversation and helped establish a shared understanding of the challenges ahead. This foundation then allowed the approach to be extended across educational units and eventually into schools.

Alongside leadership, the role of wider participation also stands out. Rybnik's combination of an open survey and a futures workshop enabled residents, entrepreneurs, and community members to bring their perspectives into strategic discussions. This reflects a growing recognition that long-term planning benefits from diverse viewpoints, not only expert input. Such engagement also deepens the legitimacy of strategic decisions and strengthens trust in public institutions.

Finally, both organisations recognised the importance of continuity and scaling. Vestland's decision to expose 300 school leaders to Futures Literacy and Rybnik's intention to use futures insights across the strategy cycle show that Futures Literacy is most effective when it becomes an everyday practice or part of an established routine, rather than an occasional activity.



Key Takeaways for Public Organisations

1. Futures Literacy is most effective when connected to concrete and relevant organisational challenges.
2. Leadership engagement creates room for long-term reflection and strengthens internal alignment.
3. Inclusive participation enriches strategic thinking and supports more grounded, legitimate policy choices.
4. Futures methods help organisations coordinate across units and improve shared understanding.
5. Sustained capacity-building ensures Futures Literacy becomes part of everyday organisational practice.

3.2. Education

Why is futures methodology relevant for this sector?

The well-being of future generations is a major priority for both individuals and institutions. Imagining what the world will look like in years to come is especially important because it is the environment our children will inherit. Introducing future-based methods into education, for students and teachers alike, can help schools adapt to rapid changes affecting both children and society. Although the path ahead is filled with uncertainty, most current education systems are not built with future thinking at their core, so adopting more forward-looking activities and frameworks is essential to remain relevant.

Education serves as a structured mechanism for the intergenerational knowledge transmission and its co-creation (UNESCO, 2021). Through learning, students are introduced to new concepts and opportunities that influence both their own futures and that of society at large. It is essential for education systems to evolve in response to emerging challenges and opportunities, thereby helping to shape a shared world and a sustainable future for present and future generations. Considering potential future scenarios not only facilitates strategic planning but also encourages critical reflection on current actions and allows for the adjustment of behaviours accordingly.

The Case Of Fyllingsdalen Upper Secondary School, Norway

Fyllingsdalen Upper Secondary School is a high school in Bergen, Norway that teaches young people in general and vocational studies. Fyllingsdalen Upper Secondary School implemented future methodologies in response for the curriculum change in Norway in 2019, which aimed, among other things, to introduce more interdisciplinary learning into the Norwegian schooling system.

Over the course of a year, Fyllingsdalen Upper Secondary School conducted a series of meetings with the non-profit futures agency Fremtenkt, which included workshops involving both students and staff. Initially, teachers and staff participated in internal futures workshops to enhance the organisation's strategic approach to education and school development. Educators also began incorporating futures methodologies within their own classrooms. During these workshops, participants developed utopian scenarios that prompted more focus on the topic of sustainability as a key theme for future activities. The integration of futures thinking and sustainability became central to numerous school initiatives.

Afterwards, the school introduced an initiative called „Sustainability Week” for students. Over the course of a week, regular core curriculum classes are paused so that students can participate in interdisciplinary activities that encourage self-reflection and thinking about sustainability and society. Initially, several staff teachers joined the project on a voluntary basis, but now „Sustainability Week” is held every year for all first graders with all teachers participating. The initiative has been running successfully for five years.

In 2026, Fyllingsdalen Upper Secondary School collaborated again with Fremtenkt to train the entire school staff in using the Futures Literacy Lab method. The school is now employing this method to further develop Sustainability Week into a broader “Danningsveke” (Formation/Bildung Week), strengthening the reflective and interdisciplinary dimension of the initiative.

The Formation/Sustainability Week features workshops, events and activities focused on young people’s futures and societal well-being, encouraging sustainability, equality and democratic participation. It uses methods like futures metaphors and futures creating workshops for critique and utopia. Some of the future-oriented students’ ideas are then put into practice, including examples such as vintage clothes swaps, food waste decorations, sustainable fashion shows, insect houses, and community clean-ups.

The main transformation resulting from adopting future thinking for the Fyllingsdalen Upper Secondary School involved a reorganisation of how the school operates. Suspending the core curriculum for a week in favour of more adaptable learning approaches demands both boldness and invention from teachers and staff. Teacher involvement in planning started with volunteers but gradually grew to include the entire school staff, making their engagement a crucial component.

As a result, the school’s approach to sustainability and Futures Literacy has become embedded in its ethos, enabling both staff and students to explore pressing societal issues through creative and interdisciplinary means. By embracing this dynamic model, Fyllingsdalen Upper Secondary School positioned itself as a forward-thinking institution, equipping its community to navigate the uncertainties of tomorrow while maintaining a supportive environment open to innovative educational practices.

Source: own analysis based on a study visit.

Young people’s futures are shaped by current curricula and teaching methods, which often change slowly and resist adaptation. Traditional teaching and learning approaches are considered most effective, leading educators to stick with them even as they may not prepare students for future demands. As a result, students often learn outdated skills that could soon become irrelevant (Bednarczyk et al., 2018). In response to that, an increased focus is given to transversal skills, such as critical thinking, teamwork, strategic thinking, and interdisciplinarity, that can be lifelong skills applied across various fields and situations. Futures-oriented methods like Futures Literacy can provide frameworks within which students can develop these transversal skills.

The role of teachers in developing future thinking skills is crucial for reshaping education (Suhendar et al., 2025). Principles such as reflexivity, collaboration, diversity, and problem-solving are key to future-oriented teaching. Experiential learning, using creative approaches, field studies, and engaging with communities, helps students apply futures thinking beyond theoretical classroom discussions. Another vital aspect is promoting reflection and evaluation, so that learners can critically consider the past, present, and future, and adjust their choices and views according to possible scenarios.

Future-oriented thinking helps address upcoming challenges for today's students. As youth unemployment and job vulnerability rise, connecting education with essential skills is crucial for planning careers and shaping the job market. Increased mobility, workforce relocation, and global issues like climate change and conflict-driven migration could transform society in the coming decades. Lifelong learning and acquiring knowledge beyond formal education are vital for staying informed and engaged. Adopting a forward-thinking mindset prepares individuals to navigate these changes.



The Case of NLA University College, Norway

NLA University College is a private university college in Norway which offers education programmes for pre-service teachers. The futures methodologies were introduced due to the great interest in interdisciplinary collaboration between various departments at the University College, including language teachers, social studies and natural sciences (sustainability). With busy schedules among academicians, a Nordplus Horizontal funded project led by the non-profit futures agency Fremtenkt (FLITAPE) provided the time and resources necessary for these activities.

Faculty from the Norwegian department, the social sciences and the natural sciences collaborated with Fremtenkt to implement the project over 12 months. The futures-oriented initiative combined an online module and an on-campus workshop designed to introduce pre-service teachers to the concepts of Futures Literacy and strengthen these competencies among prospective educators. Activities included the Polak game, group sessions exploring images of the future, scenario reframing exercises, online surveys, curated readings, audiovisual materials, and related assignments employing methods such as storytelling and creative writing. Students were evaluated both before and after the programme to measure the learning outcomes of the activities. Data from this will serve as the foundation for academic publication and an internal case study examining interdisciplinary collaboration at the University College.

The pre-service teachers engaged with the application of futures-oriented methods across a range of activities and subjects. They demonstrated enthusiasm for alternative approaches to learning and reported an increased sense of agency regarding future pedagogical strategies and understanding learners' realities. The module facilitated critical reflection on the future of both the education system and society, while also fostering creative thinking, curiosity, and the development or enhancement of Futures Literacy competence.

Interdisciplinarity is increasingly recognised as essential for futures education, making it valuable for both pre-service teachers and teachers to learn about it early on. For years, educational systems focused narrowly on isolated subjects, discouraging collaboration across disciplines. However, with today's unpredictable job markets, environmental issues, and demographic shifts, cross-disciplinary thinking has become crucial. Embracing flexibility and teaching the importance of preparing for diverse scenarios can help foster an educational transformation that benefits everyone involved.

Source: own analysis based on a study visit.

Implications of other organisations, lessons learned, points for inspiration

Although educational institutions play a vital role in preparing today's students for the future, many obstacles make futures thinking both difficult and complex. In this evolving landscape, the willingness to experiment, reflect, and adapt becomes essential, helping educational communities cultivate environments where both educators and students feel empowered to envision and shape a more sustainable, inclusive tomorrow.

When working with students, it is essential to consider their time and capacities, and to strike a balance between creative brainstorming and practical execution. It is important to allow space for appreciating ideas without the immediate pressure to implement or assess them. Still, having a tangible outcome from futures thinking—such as hosting a sustainability week event—helps ground these interdisciplinary efforts. What truly supports this process is a clear agenda and visible activities, like putting some of the proposed ideas into practice.

Another core barrier includes limited opportunities for implementing students' ideas regarding their possible futures produced during future-oriented exercises. When such ideas are not put into practice, students may become disengaged and experience self-doubt. It is therefore important for educators to combine exploration of possible futures with fostering competencies that help young people translate these ideas into practicable short term goals.

It is also worthwhile to align futures oriented work with teachers' pre-existing motivations and ideas. Tapping into personal drivers can significantly benefit both teachers and students. Staff should also make time to consider the bigger picture and set a future vision, not just focus on daily schedules or logistics. One effective approach is to begin activities on a voluntary basis, identify emerging leaders, and then gradually involve the entire school and staff.

One key to successful teaching is delivering clear, concise messages to students. Encouraging intuitive learning, rather than enforcing a strictly structured curriculum, helps foster creativity, curiosity and independence—competencies closely related to Futures Literacy. Even small changes, such as adjustments in certain classroom activities or dedicating a single week to futures thinking—like in Fyllingsdalen Upper Secondary School—can have a meaningful impact without requiring a complete overhaul of school activities.

Another key to success is starting with global issues that affect many communities but relating them to local experiences. For instance, students can consider not only the global impact, but also how climate change impacts their own neighbourhood. When people share common experiences and needs, it helps them understand potential future effects on a personal level. Additionally, it is helpful to choose topics that are relevant and somewhat complex, yet not too specialized, so participants don't need any prior expertise.

Introducing current and future teachers to tools and methods for exploring and discussing possible futures—including the future of learning—creates a space that is comparable to similar processes used with students. In both cases, participants engage with their assumptions about the future, articulate hopes and concerns, and reflect on how these shape educational practices and broader societal developments. Making these reflections explicit can strengthen mutual understanding between educators and students, and support a more collaborative and reflective approach to shaping education moving forward.

Key Takeaways for the Educational Sector

1. **Futures methodologies help education systems proactively prepare learners for uncertainty, complexity, and long-term societal challenges.**
2. **Embedding futures thinking strengthens transversal skills, such as critical thinking, collaboration, and reflexivity, that remain relevant across various jobs, technologies, or curricula.**
3. **Future-oriented approaches shift education away from expert-centred knowledge transfer toward more participatory, interdisciplinary, and democratic learning cultures.**
4. **Practical educational initiatives demonstrate that futures thinking can move beyond being just a mental activity and create tangible results.**
5. **Teacher engagement and professional development are decisive success factors, as Futures Literacy must be cultivated among educators before it can meaningfully reach students.**
6. **Linking global challenges to local contexts and tangible outcomes increases student agency, motivation, and trust that imagining the future is not just an abstract exercise, but a skill with real-life applications.**

3.3. Culture

Why is futures methodology relevant for this sector?

Culture and art are among the key areas of life, not only as a means of expression, but as fundamental social practices that allow people to better understand the world and themselves. Art reflects not only the subjective experiences of individuals, but also shared social ideas, while allowing emotions and aspirations to be articulated. In this way, culture creates space for empathy, reflection and dialogue, which are essential in a world marked by uncertainty, climate crises and social tensions.

Culture is also very important because of its educational and civic potential. Arts education promotes the development of emotional competence, critical thinking and a sense of interdependence between people and the environment. Learning through culture is not just about imparting knowledge, but about co-creating meanings and the ability to act. Understood in this way, culture strengthens social resilience, enables the renegotiation of our relationship with nature, and helps to link issues of social justice with environmental challenges. Therefore, caring for culture and the arts is a prerequisite for building societies capable of solidarity and long-term thinking (ENCATC, 2025; Imagine Futures, n.d.).

At the same time, culture and art themselves operate today in a dynamically changing environment that requires new tools for orientation in the future. Cultural institutions such as museums, galleries, and art centres face complex problems and uncertainties related to climate change, technological development (e.g. rising use and popularity of artificial intelligence), funding sources, and the political situation. Traditional operating models are no longer sufficient when the future no longer appears to be a simple continuation of the present. In this context, cultural institutions and organisations might use Futures Literacy, i.e. the ability to think critically about many possible futures, recognise weak signals of change, and consciously use imagination.

The Case of Åsane Kulturhus Bergen Cultural Centre, Norway

Åsane Kulturhus, located in Bergen, is a municipally owned cultural institution that provides space for activities organised by various people and organisations. It enables residents of Åsane to participate in a diverse cultural life and acts as an intermediary, supporting non-governmental organisations and informal citizen groups that wish to formalise their initiatives, develop projects and obtain funding. The centre brings together actors with different roles and backgrounds and functions as an important meeting place in the local community. It is managed by the Arna and Åsane office of cultural affairs, a municipal cultural organisation.

Prior to the collaboration described here, Åsane Kulturhus already worked with dialogue-based formats, co-creation and cross-sector cooperation. Futures Literacy was not introduced as a new organisational strategy or reform agenda. Instead, futures-oriented methods were introduced as part of a series of public participation events on the topic of the futures of Åsane and Bergen. The workshops were initiated and led by the non-profit futures agency Fremtenkt and were hosted in the premises of the Kulturhus with organisational support from Arna and Åsane office of cultural affairs. Staff members participated in the meetings alongside other regional stakeholders, including representatives of local organisations, residents and municipal actors.

Over a period of approximately three and a half years, fourteen workshops were organised for different stakeholders in the area. A defining feature of the collaboration was its continuity and the structured way in which discussions, reflections and outcomes were documented. Notes and insights were systematically recorded and stored, which strengthened the link between dialogue and subsequent planning.

Futures-oriented methods were used as tools to engage participants and support more focused public debate. Design thinking elements contributed to structuring discussions and clarifying next steps. The value of the collaboration lay less in the application of Futures Literacy as a distinct methodology and more in the way the work was organised: sustained engagement over time, predictable processes and strong documentation practices. The approach supported coherence between meetings, idea development and implementation without replacing existing practices.

Interviews with parents and young people and a bottom-up approach to change were of key importance. Great emphasis was placed on co-creating projects with residents and reflecting on the identity of the place, social relations and environmental issues. The process also highlighted that change depends not only on attitudes and engagement, but on formal responsibilities, procedures and their simplification.

The collaboration was primarily linked to specific events, projects and dialogue processes rather than to a comprehensive institutional transformation. Futures-oriented tools were used, among other things, in yearly culture festival planning, in developing cooperation networks and

in shaping urban initiatives. Over time, selected elements of the approach were occasionally applied in particular contexts where they were considered useful.

Experience showed that engagement was strongest when attention was directed towards the near future and towards concrete, manageable measures. Overly abstract or distant future perspectives could weaken participation, particularly among citizens. What proved most effective was creating processes that strengthened residents' sense of agency in the present and encouraged them to actively co-create their neighbourhood.

The work unfolded in a context marked by political and financial challenges, as well as generational differences in levels of engagement. Some areas, such as culture, proved more open to future-oriented reflection than others. Despite these limitations, the collaboration contributed to improved cooperation between different entities and supported the planning of activities and services for organisations operating in the Kulturus.

For Åsane Kulturus, Futures Literacy was not a goal in itself but a framework that complemented and strengthened already established collaboration and participation processes. The collaboration with Fremtenkt provided continuity, methodological support and solid documentation over time. Its value lay primarily in how the processes were carried out and sustained.

Source: own analysis based on a study visit.

FL allows cultural institutions to move beyond reactive crisis management and strive for more reflective, strategic action. Foresight practices show that the future of cultural institutions will not be uniform, but multi-model: from highly digitised forms, through hybrid ones, to locally and communally rooted ones. Instead of trying to predict a single future, culture, thanks to FL, can learn to operate while embracing uncertainty, understanding the consequences of choices, and consciously shaping its roles in society. This shift towards learning about the future is crucial for preserving the autonomy and purpose of cultural institutions.

At the institutional level, FL enables culture to redefine its social role. Scenarios for the future of museums show that these institutions can become not only guardians of heritage, but also centres of social resilience, spaces for dialogue in polarised societies, and actors responding to climate crises. Scenario thinking allows us to safely test such possibilities, ask questions about the limits of autonomy, possible relationships with technology, and new models of co-management. FL opens up the field for conscious choices in line with the mission and values of culture (Frąckowiak, Figiel, 2025).

From an educational perspective, FL in culture supports the development of creative imagination, especially among young people. Research and practice show that creative activities such as writing stories, creating manifestos or artistic projects help young people think about the

systemic causes of problems and consider alternative solutions. Culture, combined with reflection on the media, colonialism and ecology, becomes a space in which FL strengthens the sense of responsibility for the future of people, societies and the planet (Imagine Futures, n.d.).

Culture can also use FL as a tool for networking learners. The future of learning is shaped by relationships, through the exchange of experiences, joint experimentation and dialogue between disciplines. Culture, understood as a space for social learning, fosters practices based on empathy, reflection and shared responsibility. In this sense, Futures Literacy is not only the ability to adapt, but also the practice of imagining and co-creating regenerative futures in which culture and art drive social transformation (ENCATC, 2025).

The Case of the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, Poland

The Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw hosted Futures Literacy workshops organised by 4CF, The Futures Literacy Company, whose aim was to outline possible futures for cultural institutions in conditions of growing uncertainty. The workshops were attended by representatives of Polish art institutions and museums, including traditional galleries, regional cultural centres, experimental art spaces and large institutions.

The research process consisted of two stages. The first stage involved extensive preliminary research conducted among experts representing museums and art institutions. The second phase of the process culminated in a two-day Futures Literacy workshop held in 2024 at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw.

The research also identified key uncertainties that will have a decisive impact on the future of the cultural sector, including the evolution of public funding, the consequences of climate change, the role of artificial intelligence, the future of cultural authority, the relationship between physical and digital experience, tensions between locality and globality, and the role of museums in responding to social and environmental challenges. These uncertainties interact with each other, creating a complex network of possible futures.

One of the key findings was the complex and ambiguous relationship between technology and cultural experience. Instead of a simple transition from physical to virtual forms, the scenarios point to the development of advanced hybrid models in which the boundaries between the material and the digital, are becoming increasingly fluid and negotiable. At the same time, environmental issues permeate all areas of future museum activity, and climate change appears not only as an external threat, but as a fundamental force transforming their priorities, functions and modes of operation.

In the political context, and growing authoritarian tendencies and the weakening of democracy, the importance of the autonomy of cultural institutions is increasing. The scenarios explore various possible paths of development, from subordination to political authority, through intermediate models, to radical autonomy based on cooperation and the management of common goods, suggesting a need to rethink traditional models of public funding.

In response to those challenges the cultural institutions should be guided in their activities by the ability to adapt, while cultivating inclusiveness, creativity and heritage protection. Thanks to this, museums can become not only places of exhibition, but also active actors shaping a more sustainable, just and connected society.

The Futures Literacy method has proven to be very effective in identifying key uncertainties and improving the adaptability of cultural institutions to technological, social and environmental changes. As a strategic tool, it has helped to strengthen their autonomy, organisational flexibility and ability to play an active social role in an increasingly complex world.

Source: (Frąckowiak, Figiel, 2025).

Implications of other organisations, lessons learned, points for inspiration

Due to the important role of creativity in thinking about the future, as shown in the examples above, the application of FL in cultural institutions, which by the nature of their activities use creative processes more frequently and intensively, is easier. This offers great potential for taking action and introducing changes.

The use of FL allows us to see the systemic constraints faced by cultural institutions, such as the ambiguity of political decisions or financial instability. Unfortunately, FL will not eliminate these factors, but it allows us to see them and plan further actions taking them into account. Cultural institutions can thus take a more realistic approach to their intentions, abandoning ambitious and difficult-to-implement visions in favour of more realistic scenarios for the future and preparing them to take adaptive actions.

The workshops at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw are a particularly good example of how FL allows us to change our way of thinking from imagining a single, linear path of development to noticing how many possible scenarios for the future there are. Their multitude results from the coexistence of different models of operation, roles and relationships with the environment. The future is no longer something that will somehow happen and can be predicted, but a process that is co-created and in which audiences and the local community can be involved. This perception of the future encourages greater flexibility and a willingness to try different solutions.

By using FL tools, cultural institutions can seek new solutions to their problems. Polish cultural institutions face challenges such as low attendance and lack of community involvement in the activities undertaken by institutions, as well as a lack of or sufficient funding. FL allows us to see the complexity of the problems encountered and thus find more potential solutions, for example, how to combine physical and digital experiences in times of rapid digitalisation, instead of seeing technological progress as the downfall of cultural institutions.

Culture can not only adapt Futures Literacy tools, but also enrich them, giving them an additional emotional, artistic and critical dimension that allows for the involvement of various social groups (ENCATC, 2025). The objectives of using FL can be achieved by adapting a wide variety of tools for applying this method. For years, art has been becoming increasingly socially engaged and, at the same time, playing an increasingly important role in non-artistic fields. Art-based approaches in FL workshops support co-creation and co-reflection among participants. Thanks to the possibility of non-verbal expression of emotions and ideas, the exploration of potential futures becomes more holistic and imaginative. In addition, participants with different types of intelligence and communication styles can collaborate and work together to develop new scenarios. However, it is very important that the methods we intend to introduce to the FL workshop are well suited to the topic and purpose of a particular workshop (Lehikoinen, Tuittila, 2024).





Key Takeaways for the Cultural Sector

1. FL does not remove systemic barriers, such as the ambiguity of political decisions or financial instability, but it helps to better understand them and take them into account in planning processes.
2. Working with FL strengthens the flexibility of cultural organisations, their willingness to experiment, and the belief that the future is not something to be predicted, but to be co-created with audiences and local communities.
3. The cultural sector can not only adapt FL tools, but also enrich them with an emotional, artistic and critical dimension, which increases the involvement of diverse social groups.
4. Art-based methods encourage co-creation and co-reflection, enabling a holistic and imaginative exploration of the future, including through non-verbal forms of expression, and facilitate the participation of people with different communication styles and ways of processing information, increasing the inclusiveness of the process.
5. The effective use of artistic methods in FL involves the conscious selection of exercises tailored to the purpose, topic and context of a specific workshop.

3.4. NGOs

Why is futures methodology relevant for this sector?

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are widely recognised as one of the key actors in contemporary societies. They play a wide variety of roles, from providing humanitarian aid and protecting the environment to educating and strengthening civil society. Their importance stems from the fact that they often operate where public institutions or the market fail to respond effectively to social needs, especially in times of crisis and instability (Šerá Komlossyová, et al., 2020).

The role of NGOs is particularly important in dynamic and difficult contexts, such as armed conflicts, natural disasters, pandemics, and humanitarian crises. The functioning of such organisations involves making decisions under conditions of high uncertainty, with limited resources and rapidly changing circumstances. The work of humanitarian organisations requires constant planning, action and adaptation to new realities, often in situations where there is no single obvious solution (IFRC, n.d.).

NGOs pursue long-term and multidimensional goals that are highly dependent on the political, social, and economic environment. They are particularly sensitive to changes in funding, legal regulations, donor engagement, and relationships with partners and local communities. They operate in highly volatile and complex environments, which generates an increased need for a strategic foresight approach. This is why Futures Literacy is so important for NGOs. This skill allows them to better prepare for potential threats and respond more effectively to upcoming changes.

Adopting a future-oriented approach can increase creativity in NGOs. What is more, it can positively affect NGOs' growth, not only in financial terms, but also in terms of increased innovation and impact.

FL supports the continued functioning of an organisation, but also increases its social impact (Šerá Komlossyová, et al., 2020). Examples from the humanitarian sector show that a lack of forward thinking can lead to relying on old strategies and mindsets, which can be particularly dangerous in times of crisis. Even simple operational scenarios, such as those concerning restrictions on mobility or access to areas of operation, can significantly improve an organisation's ability to respond in conditions of uncertainty. Organisations such as Habitat for Humanity and Islamic Relief Worldwide used future scenarios to better prepare for the effects of the COVID-19

pandemic and its impact on other crises. This enabled them to adapt their strategies more quickly to the situation (IFRC, n.d.).

Many NGOs apply elements of FL intuitively and informally, often without knowing the concept of foresight and substantive preparation. These activities are not institutionalised, mainly due to a lack of specialist knowledge and limited human resources. Nevertheless, even informal practices have a positive impact on the creativity and development of organisations, which highlights the importance of further developing Futures Literacy competencies in the non-governmental sector.

The Case of Promień Słońca Foundation, Poland

For over twenty years, the Promień Słońca Foundation has been working to support people with intellectual disabilities and their families, combining the experience of parents and carers with best practices developed by other organisations in Poland and abroad. Its mission is to prepare people with intellectual disabilities for as full, active and dignified a life as possible in their local community.

In this context, FL is not a theoretical concept for the foundation, but a practical tool for everyday activities. Above all, it means long-term planning not only from the perspective of current needs, but also the future lives of those in care as adults. The foundation tests solutions in practice and evaluates their real, lasting effects. Futures Literacy is also manifested in the design of future social services, such as supported housing, professional activation paths and long-term workshop programmes, as well as in the development of cooperation systems with local governments, schools, cultural institutions and social organisations.

At the same time, the foundation consciously faces difficult scenarios for the future. One of the biggest challenges is the ageing of parents and carers, who are concerned about the future of their children. Another problem is the limited job market for people with intellectual disabilities, which means that after completing their education, many people are left without employment, prospects, or social contacts. The lack of proactive measures threatens to deepen isolation and exclusion, which is why the foundation, in cooperation with local governments, is trying to prevent these scenarios.

From the very beginning of the foundation's activity, parents and guardians associated with Promień Słońca thought in terms of different future scenarios for their children, without yet knowing the concept of Futures Literacy. Workshops and meetings encourage participants to create their own visions of the future, in which they have a voice and agency. This is particularly important for people with intellectual disabilities: it develops creativity, strengthens their sense of influence and teaches them that the future does not have to be a source of fear, but can inspire hope.

The foundation also uses FL in its own development. In practice, this means wise management, conscious selection of leaders, board members and foundation council members, as well as building a culture of cooperation, openness and innovation. Thanks to this, Promień Słońca is able to combine daily care for its charges with a long-term vision of development, consistently translating thinking about the future into concrete actions implemented here and now.

Source: (NGO.pl, 2025).

NGOs can use FL in many ways, adapting it to their scale and capabilities. One of the basic tools is the systematic observation and analysis of the environment in search of signs of social, technological, economic, environmental, and political change. Such activities allow for the early identification of upcoming opportunities and challenges, rather than reacting to them only in times of crisis.

FL can also support strategic planning processes and the development of a long-term vision for an organisation. By reflecting on the future, NGOs can not only better adapt to change, but also actively try to influence the social, environmental or political developments they desire. In this sense, non-governmental organisations can not only respond to the future, but also actively co-create it (Šerá Komlossyová, et al., 2020; IFRC, n.d.).



Implications of other organisations, lessons learned, points for inspiration

Developing the ability to use the future, observe subtle signals, connect seemingly unrelated phenomena, and think critically about the future allows NGOs to operate more consciously and responsibly. Even if these processes remain informal, systematically strengthening them can bring real benefits in the form of greater innovation, effectiveness, and resilience of the organization (IFRC, n.d.).

As shown in the examples above, Futures Literacy works very well when it is embedded in real problems and the everyday practice of an organization. In both cases, FL was not an abstract visionary exercise, but a tool responding to very specific challenges. It is therefore good practice to start with the real concerns, experiences, and questions of the participants. Working with difficult scenarios is just as important as building positive visions. Naming fears does not paralyze action but enables the design of proactive solutions.

It is also crucial to empower and involve people and communities which are directly affected by change. The Foundation's beneficiaries were treated as co-creators of the vision for the future, rather than mere recipients of solutions. FL workshops in the NGO sector should empower participants and create a safe space for them to express their own visions, including those who are usually overlooked in planning processes.

Cross-sector cooperation and networking strengthen the effects of FL. Like in presented initiative, it was based on partnerships with local governments, other organisations, educational institutions and experts, workshops should be designed as a starting point for long-term cooperation, rather than a one-off event.

FL brings the most value when it leads to concrete actions and prototypes. Workshops in NGOs should therefore end not only with reflection, but also with ideas that can be tested in practice.

An example shows that Futures Literacy is not a one-off tool, but a way of thinking and managing. In the NGO sector, this means the need to integrate FL into the daily functioning of the organisation, from planning activities, through team development, to leadership and strategy. Thanks to this, thinking about the future can consistently translate into actions taken here and now.

Key Takeaways for the NGO Sector

1. NGOs operate precisely where uncertainty, crisis, and systemic failure are most visible. FL strengthens the capacity to act under uncertainty, helping organisations move beyond reactive crisis management toward anticipatory and adaptive action.
2. NGOs pursue goals whose outcomes depend on political, social, and economic dynamics over many years. FL helps organisations align day-to-day decisions with long-term impact, even when funding cycles, regulations, or partnerships are unstable.
3. Involving the organization's beneficiaries and other people directly affected by change as co-creators of the vision for the future increases their sense of agency and engagement, the adequacy of solutions, and their social sustainability.
4. Workshops strengthen cross-sector collaboration and networking, laying the foundation for long-term partnerships rather than one-off initiatives, which is particularly important for NGOs, not only to sustain themselves but also to be able to collaborate with other organisations.
5. Many NGOs already “use the future” intuitively, through reflection, experience, and collective sense-making. The key step is to strengthen and systematise these practices, even with limited resources, rather than leaving them ad hoc or dependent on individuals.
6. Regular use of FL as a way of thinking and managing increases the resilience, innovation, and adaptability of NGOs in the long term, increasing their chances of facing new challenges, both external and internal, and surviving.

3.5. Business

Why is futures methodology relevant for this sector?

In the private sector, futures methodologies have become an increasingly important foundation for strategic decision making. Businesses operate in environments shaped by rapid technological shifts, volatile markets and changing customer expectations. In these conditions, planning tools that rely mainly on historical data or linear projections often fail to capture emerging changes.

Jonasson (2023) notes that although most organisations understand the strategic relevance of long-term thinking, they still struggle to integrate long-term thinking into everyday leadership because immediate operational pressures dominate attention and leadership approaches are often shaped by past successes rather than future conditions. Using futures-oriented methods leaders can explore alternative developments, recognise uncertainties and understand how present assumptions influence strategic choices.

Futures Literacy also matters because of its relationship to risk and resilience. The Futurice survey shows that while most employees focus on short time horizons, organisations that perceive themselves as more vulnerable to disruption tend to look further into the future and invest more deliberately in anticipatory practices (Futurice, 2019). This suggests that futures methodologies support firms in reframing uncertainty as a stimulus for reinvention.

Another important contribution of futures methodologies is their ability to broaden the knowledge base in organisations. According to the Futurice report, employees often rely on global news outlets or influential individuals (public figures, celebrities) when considering the future, while scientific research, empirical research and other forms of inquiry are used far less frequently (Futurice, 2019). Futures methods encourage more systematic and diverse knowledge inputs, reducing overreliance on popular narratives. They help teams create shared mental models and more coherent strategic dialogues, which Jonasson (2023) identifies as essential for improving leadership alignment and organisational readiness.

Gordon (2022) finds that board members across large European companies recognise high levels of external uncertainty and see it as part of their mandate to steward long-term organisational value. While boards devote more time to strategic discussions than in previous years, the majority still judge their organisations' future preparedness as only adequate. Most respondents also acknowledged that their companies were unprepared for Covid-19, despite pandemics being a well-documented wildcard scenario in public foresight efforts. Crucially, Gordon reports that only a small minority of board members use recognised foresight techniques such as horizon scanning or scenario planning, even though they acknowledge the need for better anticipatory capabilities.

The Case of Brambles

Brambles is a global logistics company that provides pooled pallets, crates and containers for fast-moving consumer goods, retail and manufacturing firms. Because its operations are closely tied to international supply chains, the company is exposed to swings in demand, shifting regulations and disruptions that can spread across regions. After several turbulent years, the

organisation decided to use futures methods to improve how it interprets long-term change and prepares for structural shifts in the supply chain.

The team responsible for innovation began by adopting a future-back way of working. Instead of starting from current logistics challenges, they first explored how consumers might behave and make choices in the coming decade. They looked at social, political and environmental developments and then traced the possible implications through the wider supply chain. This helped them avoid narrowing their focus too early and kept attention on broader patterns that could shape demand for goods and transport services. For example, discussions on changing attitudes to climate and health led to questions about the growth of regenerative farming, new food types and alternative retail formats, and how these might require different forms of storage, transport or tracking.

Scenario work was another key method. By combining several trends and exploring how they might reinforce or counteract one another, the team built contrasting pictures of how urban distribution, warehouse systems or last-mile delivery could change. One scenario considered the combined effect of denser cities, slow-living lifestyles and the expansion of fifteen-minute neighbourhoods. This raised practical questions about whether traditional delivery patterns would still be accepted or whether more local, low-impact distribution models would dominate instead.

Using these methods gave Brambles a clearer view of which external signals to track and which strategic questions deserved management attention. It also prompted more exchange between regional teams and helped shift internal conversations from short-term problem solving toward longer-term thinking.

Source: (Futures Platform, n.d.).

Futures methods also promote organisational learning. Jonasson's anticipatory leadership framework shows how foresight can help leaders match their leadership style and strategic posture to the conditions they expect to face. By assessing whether their context appears stable or turbulent, and whether they should prioritise exploitation or exploration, organisations can better determine the type of leadership behaviour, culture and capability development required for future success (Jonasson, 2023).

Experimentation is another area where Futures Literacy can be valuable. The Futurice report highlights methods such as prototyping, which involve creating tangible depictions of possible futures to provoke discussion and test reactions in practice (Futurice, 2019). These experiments help organisations investigate customer expectations, technological opportunities and internal constraints before making irreversible commitments. They also support iterative learning and reduce the risks associated with innovation by enabling insight generation earlier in the process.

Finally, Futures Literacy contributes to organisational culture. Preparing for future uncertainty cannot be done within one specialist unit. It requires distributed sensing and everyday habits that encourage employees to notice signals, imagine alternatives and engage in ongoing conversation about emerging developments. The Futurice report describes the importance of “microhabits” that embed futures awareness in daily work (Futurice, 2019), while Jonasson (2023) argues that foresight becomes powerful when it shapes how leaders think, decide and frame their environment. When futures methods are used consistently and collectively, they enable firms to become more adaptive and intentional in navigating the uncertainties that define modern markets.

The Case of Pandora

Pandora is a global jewellery company known for its strong retail presence across many regions. Operating in a market shaped by changing consumer tastes, the company wanted to strengthen its ability to think ahead and identify opportunities for strategic innovation. To support this effort, the Central and Eastern Europe division worked with 4CF The Futures Literacy Company to organise a foresight seminar focused on the future of the affordable jewellery segment in that region.

The seminar was built around a set of foresight methods chosen to help the team examine possible futures for the market and translate these into concrete strategic ideas. The first step involved analysing long-term developments that could influence jewellery buying behaviour, from social and demographic shifts to new technologies and changes in lifestyle preferences. This broader view helped participants avoid focusing only on current trends and opened space for considering how future consumers may evaluate value, design and personal expression.

A central element of the seminar was the 4CF FLEx decision-making game. Participants explored three contrasting scenarios that described different forms of technological and social change in the CEE region. Working with these scenarios encouraged the group to think about how factors such as digitalisation, ethical consumption or changes in retail channels might affect the appeal of affordable jewellery. The exercise created a shared understanding of how diverse developments could reshape demand, distribution and product expectations. Alongside the scenario work, facilitators explained how foresight methods can support ongoing strategic planning and innovation by giving teams a structured way to question assumptions and identify emerging possibilities.

The seminar produced a series of strategic innovation ideas that aligned with Pandora’s longer-term vision. It also introduced the CEE team to a set of practical foresight approaches they can apply in their own work. The most significant outcome was the shift in mindset it encouraged. By working with multiple futures and examining how external change might affect their market, participants strengthened their ability to think beyond short-term commercial pressures. This created a stronger basis for future-oriented strategy development and helped reinforce a culture that supports long-term competitiveness and innovation within Pandora.

Source: (The Futures Literacy Company, 2025).

Implications of other organisations, lessons learned, points for inspiration

Businesses that work with futures methods show that these approaches can influence how companies make sense of change and prepare for shifting markets. Many firms still base decisions on familiar patterns or short planning cycles, but the competitive environment is moving faster than these routines can accommodate. When companies bring a longer view into their strategy to work, they gain a clearer picture of how customer behavior, technologies, regulations or supply conditions might evolve and what this could mean for their products and operations.

In organisations that use foresight, the teams benefit from stepping outside the immediate pressures of quarterly results. When people are encouraged to look further ahead, it becomes easier to see that their market may not continue on its current trajectory. This wider perspective helps present needs and risks that would not be visible through standard market analysis. It also prevents strategy discussions from becoming locked into the present and opens room for alternatives that would otherwise be dismissed too early.

Foresight is useful for building a shared understanding across departments or levels of organisation. In many businesses, different teams track different operations: sales teams look at customers, logistics track efficiency, and leadership focus on financial performance. Futures methods give these groups a way to look at the same external developments and discuss them from their own perspectives.

Culture plays a role as well. Firms that make progress in this area usually treat futures work as something that belongs to everyday practice, not only to special workshops. Futures work then becomes, as previously mentioned, a form of literacy, a skill that is used across tasks and responsibilities. Asking simple “what if” questions, paying attention to small shifts in customer expectations, or comparing assumptions across teams gradually builds awareness of change.

Leadership influence is equally important. When senior managers show interest in longer-term thinking, the rest of the organisation is more willing to engage. Leaders do not need to predict the future; they only need to make it acceptable to question assumptions and to bring less obvious possibilities into the room.

Another lesson is the link between foresight and practical experimentation. Companies that combine both approaches are better able to test which emerging ideas or business directions deserve further attention. Small experiments help teams see how customers react, how operations might need to adapt and what new capabilities would be required.



Key Takeaways for the Business Sector

1. Futures Literacy helps companies look beyond short planning cycles and rethink assumptions based on past success.
2. Companies that recognise a higher risk of disruption are more likely to benefit from looking further ahead and working with uncertainty more deliberately.
3. Futures methods broaden the inputs used in strategy by moving beyond headlines and individual opinions toward more structured analysis.
4. Shared scenarios and foresight discussions help different teams develop a common view of external change and how it affects the business.
5. Combining foresight with small experiments helps companies explore new ideas before making large investments.
6. Using futures thinking regularly, rather than as a one-off exercise, strengthens a company's ability to adapt and stay competitive over time.

4. Guidelines for adaptation of Futures Literacy to the Latvian and Polish contexts

Futures Literacy offers a way of working with uncertainty that is particularly relevant for societies undergoing rapid social, economic, and institutional change. Rather than asking people or organisations to predict what will happen, FL focuses on how ideas about the future shape decisions, behaviours, and emotions in the present. This could be useful in Latvia and Poland, where experiences of transformation over recent decades have strongly influenced how individuals and organisations relate to the future.

In both countries, public debate about the future is often dominated by risks, crises, and short-term pressures. Long-term thinking is frequently perceived as abstract, elitist, or disconnected from everyday concerns. At the same time, individuals are increasingly expected to adapt continuously; to changing labour markets, funding systems, technologies, and social norms, often with limited institutional support. This tension creates a gap between the scale of future-related challenges, and the tools people have to engage with them meaningfully.

Building on the cases, lessons learned, and reflections presented throughout the report, this chapter outlines guidelines for adapting Futures Literacy to Latvian and Polish contexts. The overall aim is to support futures thinking that is not an additional burden, but a resource for navigating uncertainty in everyday professional and civic life.

4.1. Challenges regarding the future considering those countries

Latvia and Poland share several structural challenges that shape how people imagine and approach the future. One of the most visible and widely discussed issues is demographic change. Ageing populations, declining birth rates, and long-term migration trends affect i.a. labour markets, and public services. In many regions, especially outside major cities, the future is associated with shrinking communities, reduced access to services, and fewer opportunities for younger generations.

Over the past decades, both countries have experienced rapid integration into global markets, technological change, and shifts in dominant industries. Automation, digitalisation, and the green transition are already reshaping work, often faster than education systems and reskilling mechanisms can respond.

Political and social factors also influence future imaginaries. Polarisation, fluctuating trust in institutions, and rapidly changing policy priorities shorten time horizons and encourage reactive decision-making. In public discourse, the future is often framed as something that must be defended against—through protection, control, or resilience—rather than as a space for exploration and learning. This defensive orientation can limit creativity and reinforce a sense that the future is imposed rather than co-created.

What is often missing are accessible frameworks and practices that allow people to engage with these concerns without falling into fear, fatalism, or purely technical planning. Futures Literacy addresses this issue by offering a way to work with uncertainty that does not require prediction, expertise, or control, but instead focuses on awareness, reflection, and agency.

4.2. Relevance of thinking creatively, giving agency to people

The cases presented in this report demonstrate that FL is most effective when it supports people in reclaiming a sense of agency in relation to the future. In contexts marked by repeated transformation and instability, individuals often internalise the belief that they must simply adapt to forces beyond their influence.

Creative thinking is central to the process of reclaiming agency. FL moves beyond dominant modes of future thinking, such as forecasting what is likely or planning what is desired. While these modes are useful, they tend to reproduce existing patterns and power relations. By introducing alternative, sometimes unfamiliar futures, FL allows participants to notice the limits of their habitual thinking. This moment of disruption is not meant to confuse or destabilise, but to open space for learning.

In Latvian and Polish contexts, where education and organisational cultures often prioritise correctness, efficiency, and expertise, creative exploration of the future can initially feel uncomfortable. However, the cases in this report show that once participants experience that futures exercises are not about being “right,” but about experimenting with perspectives, resistance often gives way to curiosity.

Agency in FL is also deeply relational. Futures work rarely produces insight in isolation. Group processes, whether in classrooms, workshops, or organisational settings, allow participants to see how differently others imagine the future, and how these differences influence decisions. This collective dimension could be particularly important in societies where individualisation of responsibility has increased, while collective problem-solving capacities have weakened.

Another crucial aspect is the emotional dimension of agency. Thinking about the future often evokes anxiety, grief, or frustration, especially when linked to loss of stability or identity. FL does not eliminate these emotions, but creates conditions in which they can be acknowledged and processed.

4.3. Recommendations for the organisational adoption of FL

The cases presented in this report show that Futures Literacy (FL) can be meaningfully applied across very different organisational settings, including public administration, education, non-governmental organisations, and business. While the missions, constraints, and operating logics of these sectors differ, the underlying challenge is similar: organisations are required to make decisions today under conditions of long-term uncertainty, accelerating change, and limited predictability. The following recommendations therefore focus specifically on how FL can be introduced and sustained within organisations, rather than at the level of individual practice alone.

Embed Futures Literacy in existing organisational processes

An important lesson from the cases surveyed is that Futures Literacy is most effective when it is embedded in existing organisational routines, rather than treated as a standalone innovation. In public administration, this may mean integrating futures-oriented questions into strategy development, policy reviews, or programme evaluations. In educational institutions, FL can be woven into curriculum planning, staff development days, or interdisciplinary projects. In NGOs and businesses, it can become part of annual planning, risk assessment, or innovation processes.

Instead of adding new layers of work, organisations can ask slightly different questions within familiar processes: What assumptions about the future underpin this decision? Which developments could challenge this plan? What alternative futures should we keep in mind? Such integration reduces resistance and helps futures thinking become a normal part of organisational language and practice.

Start with concrete and relevant organisational challenges

Across sectors, Futures Literacy gained traction when it was clearly linked to real organisational concerns. In public administration, these often include demographic change, workforce shortages, service sustainability, or policy coherence. In education, curriculum relevance, student well-being, and teacher capacity are common entry points. NGOs frequently face funding insecurity, leadership succession, and long-term impact questions, while businesses focus on market change, customer behaviour, and technological disruption.

Rather than introducing FL as an abstract capability, organisations should start with issues that already create uncertainty or tension. Futures methods help organisations explore these challenges without immediately jumping to solutions, enabling deeper reflection on what is taken for granted and what might change.

Secure leadership involvement while supporting broad participation

The cases demonstrate that leadership involvement is a critical enabling factor. When senior leaders participate in futures-oriented processes, they legitimise long-term reflection and signal that questioning assumptions is acceptable. In public administration and education, leadership engagement helps create space for cross-departmental or interdisciplinary dialogue. In NGOs and businesses, it supports alignment between strategic vision and everyday practice.

At the same time, FL should not be confined to management levels. Its value increases when diverse perspectives are included—staff, educators, frontline workers, and, where relevant, users or community members. Combining leadership support with broad participation helps avoid futures thinking becoming a purely strategic or symbolic exercise and strengthens organisational ownership of the insights generated.



Use Futures Literacy to support coordination and shared understanding

Many organisations struggle with fragmentation: different departments, units, or teams operate with their own priorities and implicit futures. FL offers a shared framework for discussing long-term change across organisational boundaries. Scenario work and collective reflection make differences in assumptions visible and negotiable, supporting better coordination.

In public administration, this can reduce siloed thinking between policy areas. In schools and universities, it can strengthen collaboration between subjects or departments. In NGOs, it supports alignment between mission, projects, and funding strategies. In businesses, it helps teams connect market insights, operational realities, and strategic ambitions.

Treat uncertainty as a resource for learning, not only as a risk

Organisational cultures often treat uncertainty primarily as something to be managed, reduced, or avoided. FL recognizes uncertainty as an inherent condition of complex systems and a potential source of learning. This shift is particularly important in sectors under constant pressure to deliver stability, such as public administration and education.

By working with multiple futures rather than single forecasts, organisations can stress-test strategies, explore unintended consequences, and identify blind spots. This does not replace risk management but complements it by broadening the range of possibilities considered and reducing overconfidence in dominant narratives.

Support emotional and relational dimensions of organisational change

Future-oriented work often brings latent fears and tensions to the surface—about job security, organisational survival, or loss of professional identity. Effective FL processes therefore create space for reflection, dialogue, and emotional processing alongside analytical work.

In educational and NGO contexts, this may involve acknowledging burnout or mission fatigue. In public administration and business, it may relate to anxiety about restructuring or loss of relevance. Addressing these aspects openly helps build trust and increases willingness to engage with long-term change.

Translate futures insights into organisational action

FL is not about producing definitive plans, but organisations still need to connect reflection with action. Effective practices include identifying small experiments, pilot projects, or changes in routines that can be tested in the present. In business, this may take the form of prototyping new services or customer approaches. In education, experimenting with new learning formats. In NGOs, testing alternative partnership or funding models. In public administration, adjusting consultation or coordination mechanisms. These actions help demonstrate the practical value of futures thinking and prevent it from remaining at the level of abstract discussion.

Build internal capacity and continuity

Finally, FL is most valuable when it becomes a sustained organisational capability rather than a one-off intervention. This requires investing in internal capacity: training facilitators, documenting processes, and creating opportunities for ongoing learning. It might be worth relying on internal “ambassadors” who keep futures-oriented practices alive and adapt them to changing needs.

Across sectors, continuity also depends on recognising that FL is a way of thinking, not a single method. When organisations repeatedly return to futures-oriented questions in their everyday work, they strengthen their ability to navigate uncertainty, adapt strategically, and act with greater confidence and coherence over time.

The cases and recommendations in this report demonstrate why Futures Literacy is an essential organisational capability in times of profound uncertainty. FL matters because it enables organisations to question the often-unspoken assumptions that shape present decisions, rather than treating the future as something to be predicted or controlled. The report shows, across diverse sectors, that when Futures Literacy is embedded in everyday processes, connected to real challenges, supported by leadership, and opened to broad participation, it strengthens coordination, learning, and strategic adaptability. Perhaps most importantly, it helps organisations relate differently to uncertainty—seeing it not only as a risk to be managed, but as a resource for reflection, creativity, and collective sense-making. When translated into concrete experiments and sustained through internal capacity-building, Futures Literacy can support more resilient, reflective, and forward-aware organisations that are better equipped to act thoughtfully in the present while remaining open to multiple possible futures.

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