

Global Trends

Global Demand for Strategic Foresight

In recent years, demand for strategic foresight tools has increased sharply. This is linked to two interrelated reasons.

The first is growing uncertainty: governments, international organizations and businesses increasingly have to make decisions in an environment where external shocks, technological shifts, conflicts, climate and social risks change conditions faster than they can be described by a single baseline forecast. The second is the crisis of the old governance model, which identifies such changes too late and begins to act only once their consequences have already emerged.

As a result, strategic foresight is changing its status. From a specialized tool of long-term analysis, it is becoming part of the governance system: it helps decision-makers operate in an uncertain environment, test the robustness of decisions under different scenarios and prepare options for action in advance.

Institutional Transformation: The UN Experience

In the UN system, strategic foresight has become part of the UN 2.0 management reform. This reform reflects a shift from a relatively stable logic of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals to work in a crisis environment, where pandemics, conflicts, climate risks, debt burdens, inequality and technological shifts simultaneously slow progress and change the conditions for implementing international programs. Its aim is to strengthen the organization's ability to act in a complex and rapidly changing environment.

The traditional model, based on mandates, procedures and reporting, is no longer sufficient when crises develop simultaneously, reinforce one another and require faster adaptation of decisions. For this reason, the UN identifies five key areas for renewing its management model — the Quintet of Change: data, digital tools, innovation, strategic foresight and behavioral science.

Within this logic of institutional renewal, foresight becomes one of the system's core capabilities: it should enable the organization to detect change earlier, understand its consequences more effectively and adapt programs and decisions more quickly.

Resilience and Strategic Autonomy: The EU Experience

The European Union develops strategic foresight according to a different logic. In the EU approach, foresight serves as a tool for strengthening the resilience and strategic autonomy of a complex political and economic system.

In 2020, against the backdrop of the pandemic, the European Commission began publishing annual Strategic Foresight Reports, linking strategic foresight to the issue of European resilience. At that stage, the focus was on the EU's ability to withstand crises, reduce vulnerabilities, maintain governability and recover from external shocks.

In 2025, this logic was expanded through the Resilience 2.0 framework. The emphasis shifted from resilience as a response to crises toward proactive resilience: the ability to restructure the economy, security, technologies, democratic institutions, social policy and skills systems in advance for conditions of prolonged turbulence.

For this reason, contemporary European foresight works not only with risks but also with opportunities. It helps identify where external dependence becomes a vulnerability, where a crisis opens a window for a new solution, and what changes are needed for the EU to retain the capacity to act autonomously through 2040 and beyond.

Anticipatory Governance: The OECD Approach

The OECD develops strategic foresight through the framework of anticipatory governance. Its distinctive feature is that it translates foresight into the everyday language of government work: the quality of policies, public-sector innovation, public services and the capacity of institutions to learn from changes in their operating environment.

Within this framework, foresight is used for preliminary testing of decisions. It helps identify in advance under which conditions a policy will remain effective, where side effects may arise, which groups may become vulnerable, and what alternatives should be prepared before a crisis occurs.

The practical orientation of the OECD approach is clearly visible in the report *Global Trends in Government Innovation 2024*, where, drawing on almost 800 cases from 83 countries, the OECD highlights a shift toward public services designed with future needs, flexibility, resilience and user participation in mind.

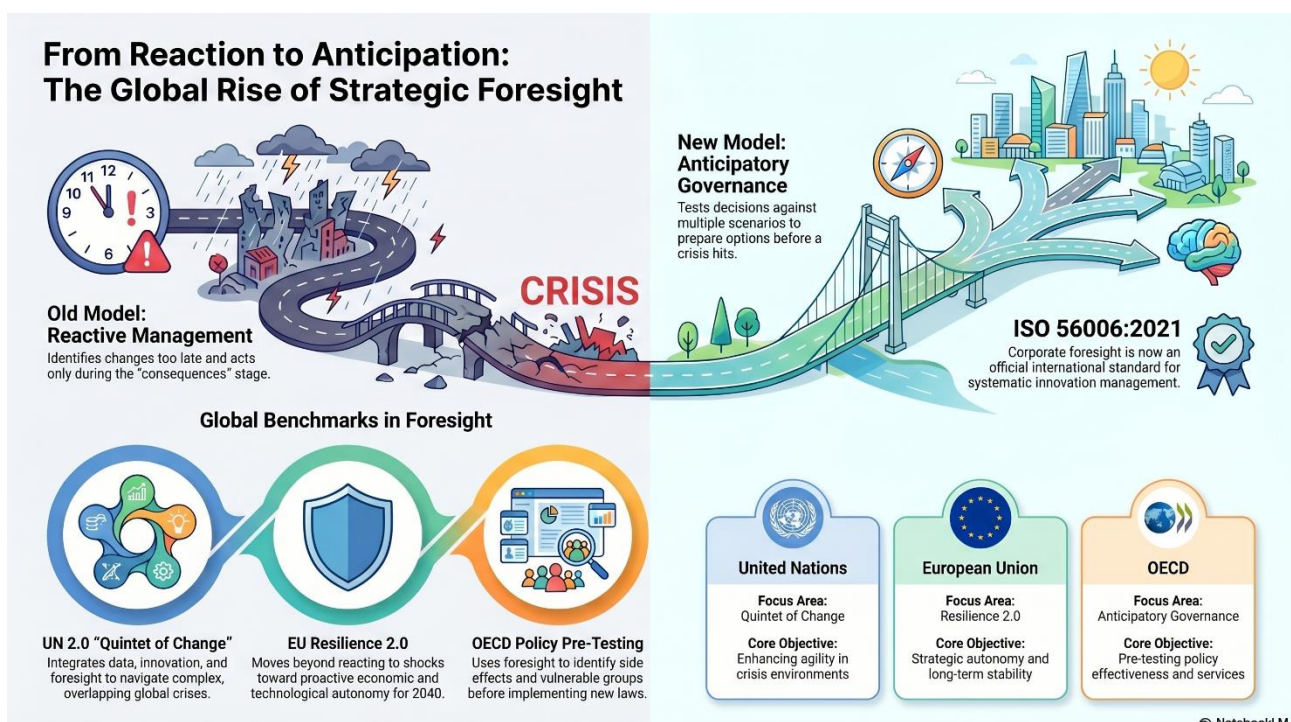
Strategic Intelligence: The Corporate Sector

In the corporate sector, a similar logic is formalized through strategic intelligence management. The ISO 56006:2021 standard treats strategic intelligence as part of the innovation management system and turns work with the external environment into a regular business process. Companies are expected not merely to collect information about markets and technologies episodically, but to establish continuous work with data, knowledge, signals of change, risks and opportunities.

Strategic intelligence is described as a cross-functional and cross-sectoral capability of an organization. It is not limited to the work of an analytical or innovation unit, but is used wherever knowledge of the external environment is needed for decisions and subsequent action. This concerns not only market monitoring, but also the ability to connect external changes with products, supply chains, investment, technologies and risk management models.

In effect, ISO 56006 shows that working with the future is becoming a management standard in the corporate sector. Strategic vision is no longer dependent solely on the intuition of senior executives; it is becoming a reproducible organizational capability. This shortens the path from external signal to decision.

Global Trends. Infographic



Why This Matters for Kazakhstan

Strategic foresight is important for Kazakhstan because of the country's high dependence on the external environment. Commodity cycles, export routes, sanctions and conflict-related dynamics, technological change, energy and investment expectations can rapidly alter the conditions for development. With this degree of openness, the country needs analytics that can identify changes in advance, connect external signals with domestic consequences and show what decisions may be required from the state, business and development institutions.

The value of such analytics is determined by its connection to practice. International experience shows that foresight becomes meaningful when its findings are embedded in real decision-making domains: strategic planning, sectoral policies, budget priorities, infrastructure projects, investment strategies and risk management. In the Kazakhstani context, this means developing a regular system of strategic foresight that helps prepare decisions in advance and test their robustness before a crisis phase begins.

The international experience reviewed here suggests three practical reference points for Kazakhstan. The logic of UN 2.0 demonstrates the importance of capabilities for working in a crisis environment: data, digital tools, innovation, strategic foresight and behavioral analytics. The EU experience is important because of its shift toward proactive resilience, where the emphasis is placed on the early restructuring of the economy, infrastructure, skills and institutions in response to long-term change. The OECD approach offers a mechanism for testing policies and public services for robustness under different scenarios before they are implemented.

The same logic should also develop in the corporate sector. International practice shows that business moves more quickly in translating work with the future into standards, procedures and regular processes. This is especially important for Kazakhstan: large companies, banks, development institutions, infrastructure operators and export-oriented sectors are the first to encounter changes in markets, technologies, logistics, sanctions regimes and investment conditions. For this reason, foresight should be integrated both into government strategies and public policies, and into corporate decision-making domains — risk management, investment planning and technology planning.