

Systems Thinking for Foresight was a workshop organized in Bucharest between September 23rd, 2009 and September 25th, 2009. The coordinator was Dr. Ozcan Saritas.

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Concept

This workshop's goals were two-fold. First it was the discussion on how to improve the Foresight practice with the introduction of the ideas of systems thinking. Second it was the application of these ideas in the context of Romanian Higher Education (HE) System. The systemic approach proved to be beneficial for the scoping of the Romanian HE Foresight exercise, the identification of Foresight topics; and setting up communication channels among the panels/work groups. Such an approach also helped to define the stakeholders/actors in the system. The ideas produced in this system addressed the multifaceted nature of the HE System in a holistic way. Thus, they were not disconnected, but instead were interconnected in a systemic way by explaining the sorts of structural and behavioural transformations needed in the Romanian HE System to achieve the future vision, which will be discussed during the HE Foresight exercise.

Objectives

The objective of this Mutual Learning Workshop was to develop a systemic view of Foresight and kick off a first discussion for the understanding of the Romanian HE system. The Mutual Learning Workshop suggested ways of working with systemic models. Through the appreciation of the HE system, its complex and multifaceted nature was explored. The outputs/outcomes produced constituted an input for the entire HE Foresight exercise.

Process

The concept of Mutual Learning Workshops was introduced briefly. Presentations on systems thinking and foresight were followed by discussions on how the practice of Foresight might benefit from the ideas of systems thinking in terms of

- understanding how systems are constructed, and
- anticipating how they might/should evolve in the future.

Subsequently, a brainstorming session was carried out with the case of the Romanian HE System. This activity provided direct input into the HE Foresight exercise.

Programme

DAY 1 (23 September 2009, Wednesday)

Welcome cocktail at Hotel Opera

DAY 2 (24 September 2009, Thursday)

Morning session

- *Welcome speech and update of the project Quality and Leadership for Romanian Higher Education by Prof. Adrian Curaj and Radu Gheorghiu*
- *Keynote Talk 1: Systems and Foresight by Prof. Denis Loveridge*
- *Keynote Talk 2: Systemic Foresight Methodology by Dr. Ozcan Saritas*



The keynote talks of Prof. Loveridge and Dr. Saritas

- Keynote Talk 3: *Novelty and Post-Secondary Education: An Exercise in Futures Literacy* by Dr. Riel Miller

Futures Literacy

- Futures Literacy is a way of thinking about the future (foresight) that is consistent with the principles of an exploratory context – non-probabilistic, spontaneous and experimentalist.
- Futures Literacy is the capacity to imagine the present differently using techniques that help identify/escape present assumptions and continuously invent/recount (tell/describe) stories/pictures that detect symptoms of inter-systemic dissonance and helps to re-establish shared sense making/meaning.



The keynote talk of Dr. Miller

- Keynote Talk 4: *The Challenge of Extra-Systems-Thinking, Experience from the German BMBF-Foresight-Process* by Dr. Philine Warnke
- *Moderated discussion*: What are the implications for Foresight practice? How can the ideas presented in the earlier session can be used to improve the Foresight practice and more specifically the Romanian Higher Education Foresight Programme? What can be a good start for a Foresight exercise? What are the ways of developing a more customised / contextualised Foresight approaches for particular systems?

After-noon session

- Keynote Talk 5: *The Futures of Higher Education, USM?s Preferred Pathway as Malaysia?s APEX University* by Dr. Lee Lik Meng
- Keynote Talk 6: *Foresight and Higher Education* by Dr. Ozcan Saritas

- Keynote Talk 7: *Research Policy Measures for Universities in Europe: Common Trends and Challenges* by Susana Elena-Perez
- Keynote Talk 8: *Understanding Romanian Higher Education System* by Prof. Adrian Miroiu

DAY 3 (25 September 2009, Friday)

Synthesis session facilitated by Dr. Ozcan Saritas, Dan Grosu, Dr. Campbell Warden, and Dr. Katja Pook.

See also

Clarifications:Systems Thinking for Foresight