

Strengthening regional strategic autonomy and preparedness through foresight: approaches, experiences and lessons learned

27 May 2026 from 10:00 to 12:30

Maastricht, the Netherlands

DESCRIPTION

In a context of geopolitical fragmentation, trade turbulence, technological rivalry and recurring supply chain disruptions, preparedness has become a central pillar of regional development policy. Strategic autonomy concerns the capacity of regions to anticipate risks, manage critical dependencies, adapt to shocks and shape long-term development pathways in an uncertain environment.

Across Europe, the agenda of strategic autonomy is reshaping industrial policy, innovation ecosystems and regional specialisation strategies. Regions are reassessing strategic priorities, mapping structural vulnerabilities and aligning socio-technological transitions with resilience, sustainability and security objectives. At the same time, they are confronted with trade volatility, disruptive technologies and geopolitical pressures that demand adaptive governance, anticipatory capacities and institutional readiness.

This peer-exchange and interactive side event explores how strategic foresight and anticipatory governance can strengthen regional strategic autonomy by embedding preparedness at the core of regional policy. It examines how regions and regional development agencies can move from reactive responses to proactive anticipation, using trend analysis, horizon scanning, scenario exploration, vulnerability mapping and experimentation to build readiness for multiple alternative futures. By combining anticipation, coordinated governance and innovation policy, regions can enhance resilience, competitiveness and long-term agency while remaining open and globally engaged.

Through practical examples, including the experiences of two regional development agencies based in Andalucía and Limburg, alongside contributions from other regions, the European Committee of the Regions, EURADA, and the OECD, the session will illustrate how regions and regional public authorities are translating foresight into concrete preparedness measures. These include strengthening innovation systems, improving inter-institutional coordination, integrating risk assessment into strategic planning and operationalising strategic autonomy through actionable policy instruments.

The session will be guided by two key questions:

- **What capacity gaps currently limit regions in strengthening their strategic autonomy and preparedness?** This includes gaps in analytical capabilities, access to data, technology foresight skills, foresight literacy, governance coordination, innovation ecosystem maturity and anticipatory institutional culture.
- **What forms of support are needed to enable regions to achieve greater strategic autonomy and preparedness?** This encompasses targeted capacity building, policy guidance, multi-level governance alignment, access to foresight tools and shared data infrastructures, peer-learning platforms and appropriate financial instruments.

By addressing these questions, the session aims to move beyond conceptual debate and identify practical pathways to reinforce regional agency, resilience and preparedness. The focus is not only on strategic positioning, but on building the institutional and policy capacities required to anticipate, absorb, adapt and transform in the face of future disruptions.

Combining strategic framing with peer-exchange and interactive reflection, the session provides a platform for policymakers and regional development actors to share approaches, experiences and lessons learned. It invites participants to reflect on how foresight can serve as a structured preparedness tool, strengthening regional autonomy, adaptive capacity and long-term competitiveness in a rapidly evolving global landscape.

AGENDA

<i>Moderator</i>	<i>Katerina Ciampi Stancova</i> , Policy Analyst, OECD Trento Centre
10:00-10:05	Welcome
10:05-10:15	Interactive part 1 Participants will engage in an interactive online exchange via Mentimeter,/Sli.do complemented by on-site discussions, to explore the concepts of preparedness, regional strategic autonomy, and related policy approaches.
10:15-10:50	Preparedness and regional strategic autonomy: from concept and policy to practical application <i>Nadim Ahmad</i> , Deputy Director, Centre for SMEs, Entrepreneurship, Regions and Cities, OECD <i>Bert Kuby</i> , Deputy Director, Directorate for Members, Plenaries and Strategy, European Committee of the Regions <i>Theo Follings</i> , President, EURADA
10:50-11:50	Cases, examples and practices in OECD countries and regions <i>Rik Hendriks</i> , Stakeholder and Strategy Advisor, LIOF (Limburg Development and Investment Company), Netherlands <i>Elisabetta Maini</i> , Head of the Research and Business Internationalisation Department.- Directorate General Economic Development, Culture and Tourism, Emilia-Romagna Regional Government, Italy <i>Antonio Castro</i> , Director-General of Andalucía TRADE, Spain, Andalucía TRADE (Agencia Empresarial para la Transformación y el Desarrollo Económico), Spain <i>Venla Virkamäki</i> , Innovation Manager, Helsinki-Uusima Regional Council, Finland
11:50-12:25	Interactive part 2: discussion
12:25-12:30	Conclusions