



European Strategy and
Policy Analysis System

Choosing Europe's Future: Global Trends to 2040

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Agenda

- **The ESPAS Initiative and EU Foresight**
- The 2024 ESPAS Report: challenges all round
- Strategic choices: how to govern multiple transitions

What is Foresight?



The structured examination of many possible futures



It focuses on what you can influence



It focuses on shaping the future
– not predicting it



It is about looking for opportunities
– not yielding to pessimism

Four ESPAS Reports



EU institutions and bodies taking part in ESPAS



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INTRODUCTION

TRENDS

The geopolitical chessboard: a world in flux

Mounting pressures on economic growth

Uneven demographic ramifications

The environmental emergency

Energy transition

Equality: a complex and multidimensional picture

The nexus of technological convergence
and acceleration

Health: a global challenge

What will change in how we live and work?

Democracy between threats and renewal

STRATEGIC CHOICES

Challenges all around

- Geopolitics
- Economy
- Environment
- Technology
- Social dimensions

The EU has a major strategic interest in working with others to tackle global polarisation, and to help prevent an escalation of rivalries and antagonisms turning into open conflicts.

Points to ponder

Europe is the fastest warming continent in the world.

By 2040, the EU will have 17 million fewer people of working age than in 2023.

The green energy transition is not only an environmental imperative, but also an economic one.

Civic space is undermined in many countries.

Horizon scanning vignettes

On the horizon: individual longevity¹

Anti-ageing research is growing quickly. Recent biotech breakthroughs include the reprogramming of cells for rejuvenation, organ regeneration with stem cell therapies, and reversing the epigenetic clock. Interest groups such as the US Alliance for Longevity Initiatives and the EU's European Longevity Initiative have formed. At the same time, *life expectancy at birth varies widely across the globe*, from 83 and more in countries like Japan and Norway to 55 in Nigeria and Chad. Will anti-ageing breakthroughs widen this gap even further?

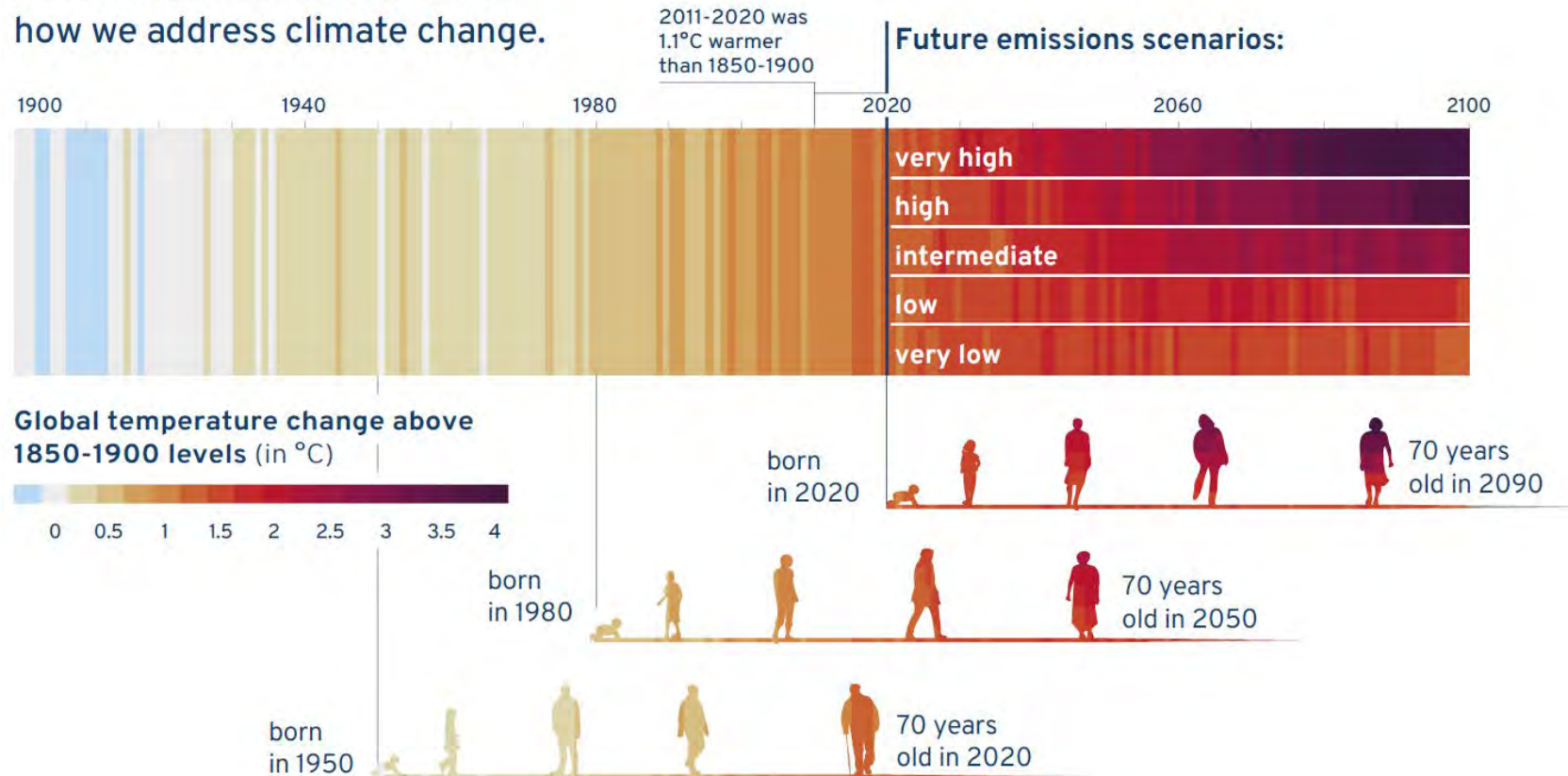
de-dollarisation¹

The traditional views on global reserve currencies were those of dominance, geopolitical power and control. The arrival of new forms of money together with a fragmented world could lead to a more diverse, volatile landscape of monetary plurality. The preference for using the dollar globally is challenged by current structural changes. China issues yuan-denominated loans in the Belt and Road Initiative. BRICS members consider creating a new currency and Brazil and Argentina also proposed a common currency. The financial, economic and geopolitical implications of de-dollarisation will be felt most strongly once alternative (digital) payment infrastructures, such as central bank digital currencies, are consolidated.

Global warming and the next generation

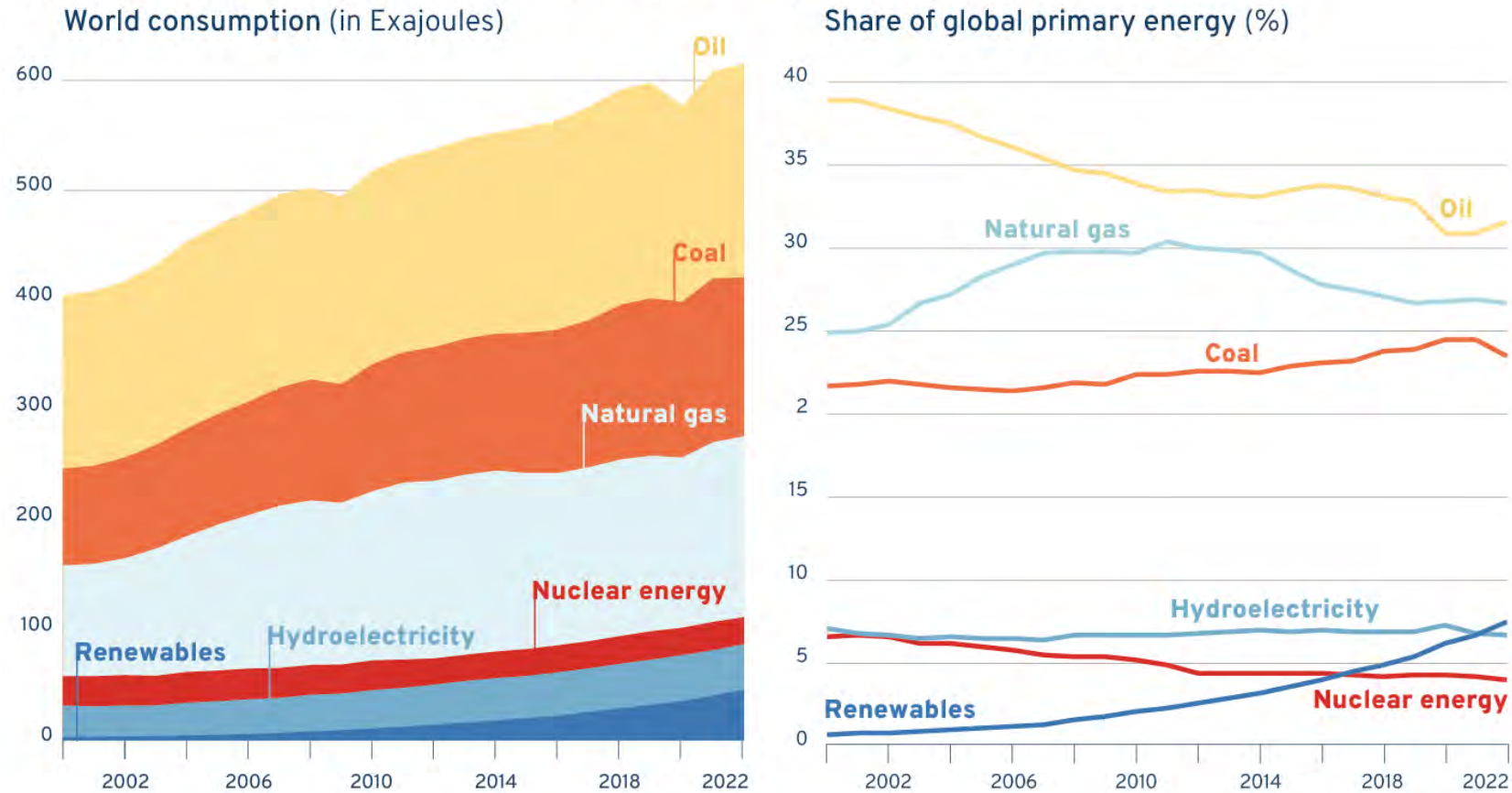
Figure 5: How current and future generations will experience global warming

Future experiences depend on how we address climate change.



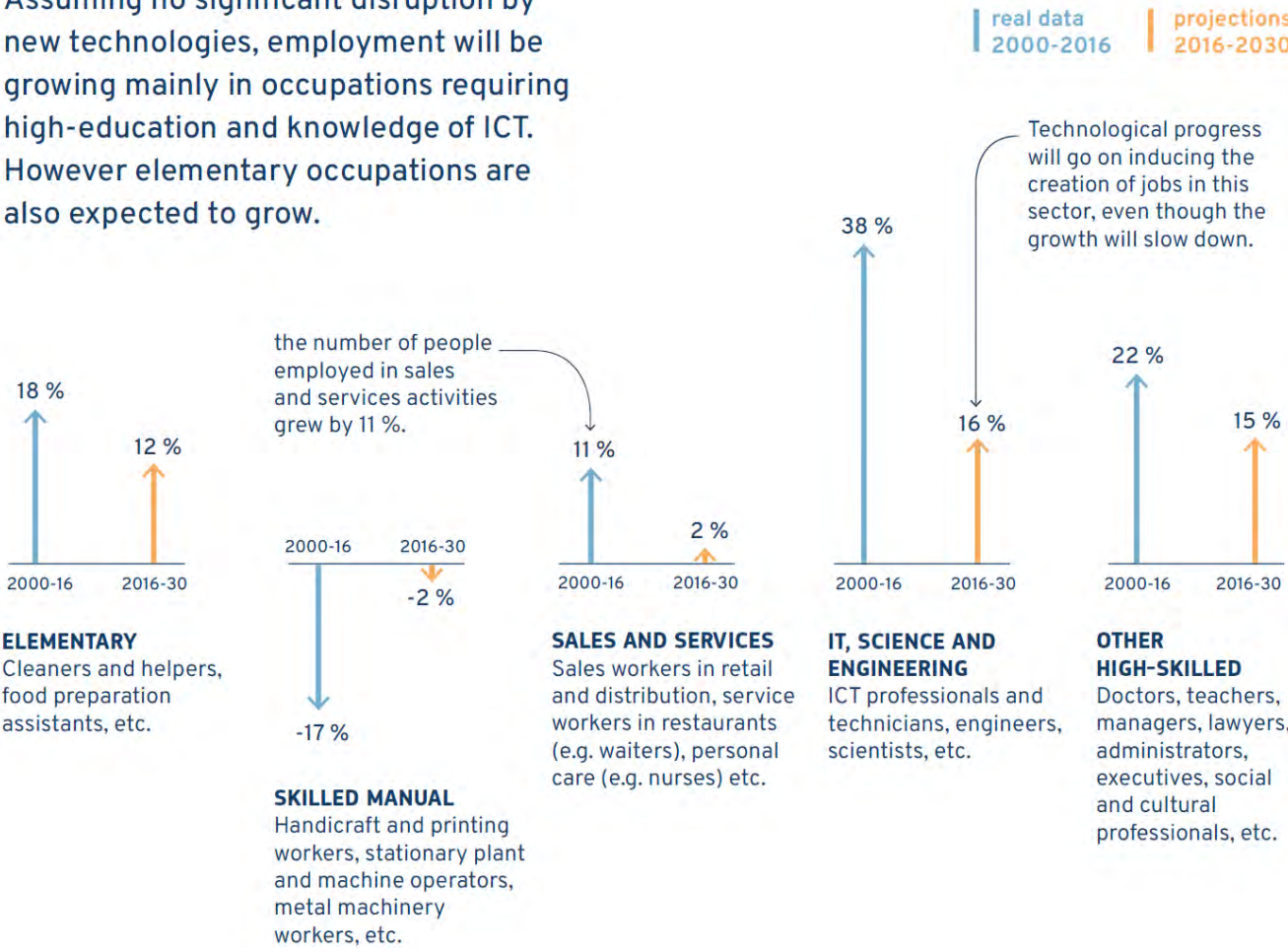
Searching for a new energy mix

Figure 6: Global primary energy consumption and energy mix

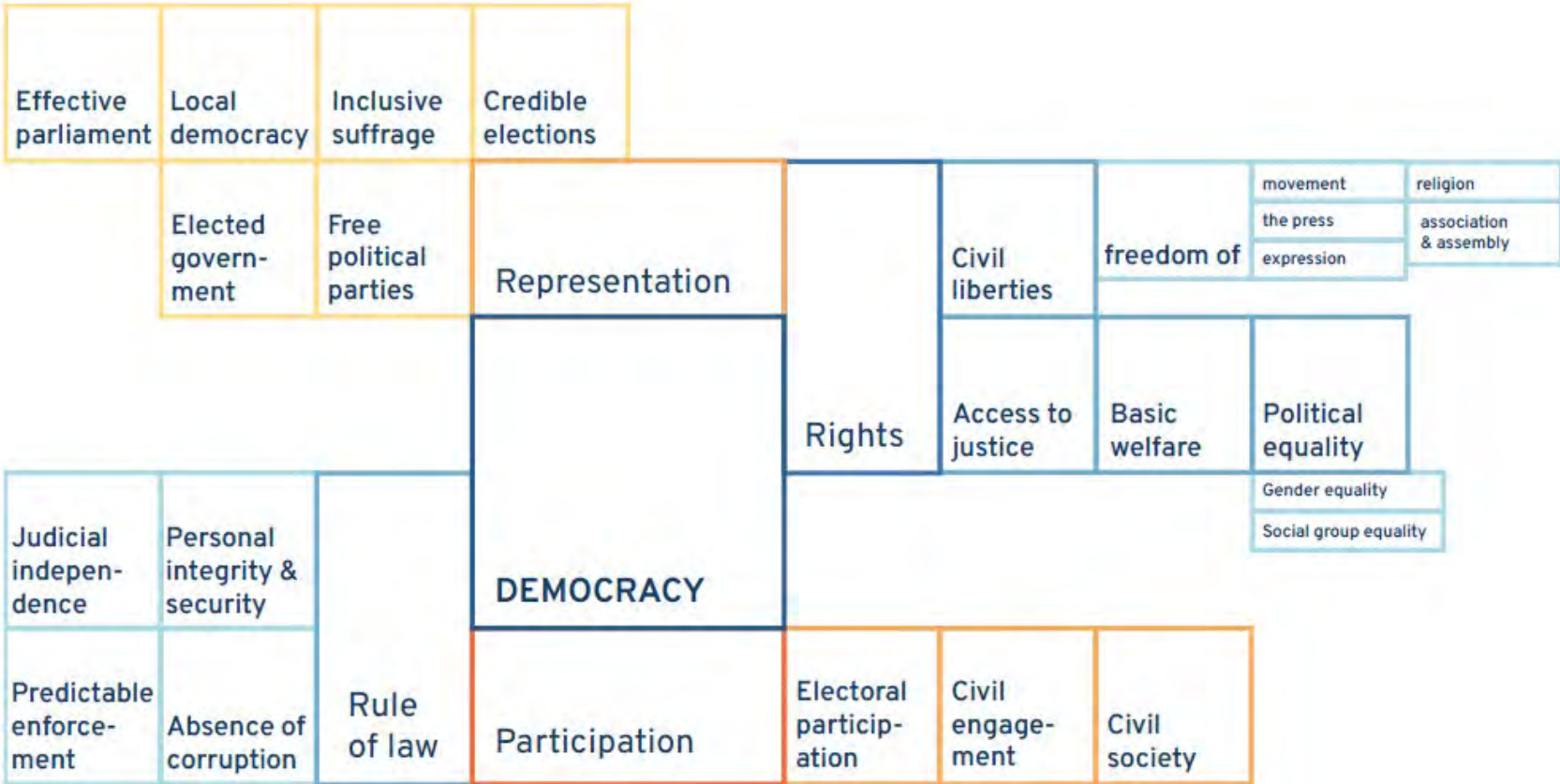


Job impacts of technological change

Assuming no significant disruption by new technologies, employment will be growing mainly in occupations requiring high-education and knowledge of ICT. However elementary occupations are also expected to grow.



A conceptual framework around democracy



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Strategic questions

- How can the EU establish itself as a smart **global power** able to navigate effectively an uncertain geopolitical landscape, acting with partners where possible and autonomously when necessary?
- How can the EU ensure that the **green transition** will be both effective and achieved in a socially and economically equitable way? What trade-offs will be necessary?



Strategic questions

- To what extent are EU policymakers willing to accept economic risks and frictions in exchange for enhanced geopolitical and technological sovereignty?

Is the EU's current **economic model** fit for purpose or does it need a major overhaul to ensure long-term sustainability and wellbeing?

Strategic questions

- How can the EU ensure that its regulatory framework incentivises **innovation** and delivers economic benefits while safeguarding against potential harms?
- How can the EU strengthen **opportunities for all** citizens, in order to prevent social fragmentation and consolidate support for the coming transitions? To what extent could social protection instruments help to mitigate anti-democratic tendencies?



Further reading

[ESPAS Global Trends Reports](#)

[ESPAS Horizon Scanning](#)

EPRS, [Future Shocks 2023](#)

EPRS, [Future Shocks 2022](#)

Analysis and Research Team, [Forward Look 2024: Managing Uncertainty](#), January 2024

European Commission, [Strategic Foresight Report 2023](#)

JRC, [Towards a fair and sustainable Europe 2050](#), 2023

EPRS, [Foresight within the EU institutions: the process to date](#)

EPRS, [Foresight within the EU institutions: the analysis to date](#)

Acknowledgements

The 2024 ESPAS Report was drafted by E. Noonan, G. Drozd, S. Finamore, A. Stuchlik, G. Porcaro and G. Barry (editor).

The following contributed valuable support: L. Bontoux, G. Carter, A. Constantinos, O. Dumitrescu, N. Kovalciková, A. Lazarski, V. Mahieu, R. Muriel Carrasco, M. Salvi and L. Vinhas de Souza.

