



Newsletter Issue 2, April 2025





Welcome to the second AHEAD newsletter!

2025 has started in a very active way for AHEAD. This newsletter provides an update on all the project's key activities and events which have been conducted since the beginning of the year.

Completion of the Foresight Exercise on Cybersecurity

AHEAD's work is structured around 5 sequential Foresight Exercises, each of them tackling one of the operational destinations defined by the EU Commission under the Horizon Europe programme's cluster 3 on civil security (i.e. Fight against Crime and Terrorism, Border Management, Cybersecurity, Infrastructure Protection and Disaster Resilient Society for Europe).

The third Foresight Exercise was completed at the end of February. Tackling issues related to cyber security, it explored the new criminal opportunities that could be made possible in the future in a completely digital society where cybercrime would have evolved into a complex ecosystem involving large-scale cybercriminal organisations, hacktivist movements and state actors.

In addition to helping anticipate the security implications and new criminal opportunities raised by technological change, the AHEAD foresight framework also aims to translate foresight results into a capability roadmap and actionable plan to support decision-making. For this purpose, information gathered through the exploration of the cyber security scenarios fed into a number of practical recommendations on training, doctrine, work premises, equipment and skills.

Methodology-wise, the use of a physical game board and prompt cards to encourage participants to embrace a forward-looking stance and consider new opportunities as criminals have proved valuable.

Testing of the AHEAD foresight framework

AHEAD's ambition is to develop a foresight methodology that can be applied by end-users themselves, even if they have no knowledge of foresight, and that can inform them about the decisions to take (on recruitment, training, doctrine, investment, equipment ...) in response to future threats. Special attention has therefore been paid from the project's outset to collaborate with police forces on organised crime-, border management- and cybersecurity-related topics as to evaluate how the AHEAD foresight methodology was prompting their forward-looking stance, helping them anticipate their capability needs





AHEAD NEWSLETTER 2

and providing them with an action plan while being used in different topics and national contexts.

To that regard, two interesting meetings can be highlighted. The first one resulted from an invitation by the Netherlands Police, partner in the

MARIT-D project, to perform an AHEAD Foresight Exercise. Involving also members of the EuCB Core group on Maritime Drug, the meeting which was held in Faro (Portugal) on 29 January 2025 focused on maritime drug trafficking and led to recommendations for law Enforcement Agencies regarding the future capabilities they would need to better fight illegal trafficking.

The second meeting took place in Vienna on 20 February 2025 where a foresight session was conducted with the Austrian Ministry of Interior on the topic of ransomware. This meeting provided a valuable opportunity to test the AHEAD methodology under the conditions that will be experienced by some of its future end-users (i.e. a chief of police interested in carrying out a quick foresight exercise to explore future threats and capability gaps on a hot topic) and demonstrated the usefulness and flexibility of the AHEAD approach.



Frédéric Daumas (Upperion) & Peter van de Crommert (DISSS) conducting the AHEAD foresight session on maritime drug trafficking



AHEAD partners using the AHEAD board game during the foresight exercise with the Austrian Ministry of Interior



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe programme under grant agreement No. 101121338



Cross-perspectives from law enforcement and academia about reasons for joining AHEAD

View from Kris D'Hoore, Chief Innovation Officer of the Belgian Federal Police



“As the Chief Innovation Officer of the Belgian Federal Police, my role is to **spearhead our forward-thinking initiatives**. Our innovation team, a vital part of the Strategy Unit, reports directly to the General Commissioner. We are focused on foresight, aiming to **professionalize this capability** to anticipate threats and opportunities stemming from societal and technological changes. We need a **practical framework** to tackle both overarching questions and specific situations.

This is precisely why the Belgian Federal Police joined the AHEAD consortium. I believe in the **project's potential to develop a robust and practical methodology** for foresight. An added bonus would be a proof of concept of a supporting tool to facilitate the execution of each step in the methodology.

Already, the project has allowed us to **benchmark** with LEA in other countries, build a **network of foresight enthusiasts**, establish a first draft of the required methodology and brainstorm a proof of concept for an efficient foresight tool.

We are eagerly anticipating the results and practical implementation of this project to **enhance the foresight capabilities** of our innovation team and of our own organization”.

View from Jasmine Madjlessi, doctoral fellow at Ghent University



“ As a doctoral fellow at Ghent University, my research focuses on **understanding and preventing crime, including through foresight**. It is of particular importance that law enforcement and civil security agencies are prepared for the future. The ability to foresee and mitigate major issues like pandemics, natural disasters, and terrorist attacks before they occur has real-world impacts on the lives of everyday people.

Within the context of strategic planning, foresight is a field of study aimed at anticipating and preparing for possible future developments. Foresight research includes a **mix of methods**, from expert surveys, to workshops, or serious gaming, aimed at identifying possible areas of concern for informed decision-making. However, **law enforcement agencies (LEAs) can face significant challenges in conducting foresight**. Some LEAs seeking to implement foresight might not know which research





methods to use. Further, having an **unmanageable wealth of information** to analyze can make it difficult for LEAs to map trends and identify priority areas due to information overload (CITE). In addition, it is generally difficult to think about the future, in part due to short-termism and risk aversion (ESPAS). This is all compounded by the operational intensity of daily policing that further restricts the ability to focus on future-oriented planning (Policing Institute).

Many of these challenges may be better understood and mitigated through academic research. For example, **qualitative research** methodologies, such as focus groups, nominal group techniques, and thematic analysis can provide validated ways of synthesizing information, such as expert opinions or emerging threats. In addition, **quantitative methods** such as statistical modelling can contribute to more precise scenario planning by identifying long-term trends in crime, technological advancements, and social change. Even research from organizational and social psychology can help address issues in group dynamics that occurs during decision-making, such as groupthink.

My research on foresight methods is motivated by a desire to have a positive impact on society through robust scientific research. **Foresight practices can have real-world consequences.** Changes in policy, investments in technology and innovation, and a more future-oriented mindsets within government have **far-reaching and long-lasting impacts on the health and safety of communities, families, and individuals**".

Promoting synergies with sister projects and initiatives

The final event of [EU-HYBNET](#), one of AHEAD's sister projects, which took place in Brussels on 12 and 13 February 2025, was an excellent opportunity to meet the project consortium again and learn more about their achievements. Results of particular relevance to AHEAD relate to the ways security needs and capability gaps can be linked, how technology mapping can be conducted and which implications for the future of EU security when combatting hybrid threats can be expected.

The presentation made by the JRC Policy Lab, as one of the event's guest speakers, about the work led by ESPAS (European Strategy and Policy Analysis System) was also of great interest for AHEAD. Carrying out a horizon scanning process since January 2022, the ESPAS speakers shared a number of valuable insights on the identification and prioritisation of "weak signals", the path from "weak signals" to "pattern of disruptions", ways to frame emerging issues for policy-making, the use of cards as prompts to engage in futures thinking and the importance of a cross sectorial approach to tackle threats.





To go further: available resources

AHEAD public deliverables can be downloaded from the project's website (<https://ahead-project.eu/deliverables/>).

Methods used for AHEAD third Foresight Exercise on “cybersecurity”

The AHEAD sequential approach was adopted on purpose to allow iterative thinking and possibilities to improve the prospective methodology. In response to one of the main difficulties identified in the previous AHEAD Foresight Exercises, namely the difficulty for law enforcement participants to adopt a criminal mindset in order to identify future possible criminal opportunities, a role-playing game was introduced in the third foresight exercise. This introduction enabled a better exploration of both criminal opportunities and possible countermeasures. Participants acknowledged a better understanding of the threats and an increased ability to anticipate criminal innovations.

The physical format of the game was further tested and it was confirmed that it encouraged interaction and creativity among the participants. The breakdown of the sessions was also redesigned to optimise participants' time, by limiting the re-contextualisation phases and directly integrating reflection on the strategic and tactical implications of the scenarios. The information gathered was then broken down into the various aspects of an organisation and translated into usable operational capabilities.





AHEAD PROJECT's DETAILS

- **Start date & duration:** 1 September 2023 – 31 May 2026
- **Project Coordinator:** Thierry Hartman (French Ministry of Interior)
- **Consortium:** 8 partners & 5 associated partners:
 - 10 LEAs
 - 2 Research Centres
 - 1 SME
- **Project Strategic Goals:**
 - Design and testing of a **foresight framework** specific to the **civil security sector**
 - **Translation** of foresight results into **capability roadmaps** and actionable plans in support of **decision-making** (recruitment, training, doctrine, investment, ...)
 - Enhancement of a **forward-looking culture** in civil security and contribution to the EC's Foresight Agenda to embed in a more systematic way **strategic** foresight into **policy-making**
- **Project Key Outputs:**
 - Delivery of a **foresight methodology**
 - Production of a **user's guide** to make the methodology accessible and easy to implement by different organizations.
 - **Capability roadmaps** translating foresight insights into actionable plans



Join the AHEAD pool of experts

AHEAD aims to create a **Pool of Experts**: a community where members from multidisciplinary backgrounds can contribute their knowledge and help us envision the future in critical areas such as: **Fighting Crime and Terrorism, Border Management, Increased Cybersecurity, Disaster-Resilient Societies and Resilient Infrastructure.**

If you have expertise in any of these above-mentioned areas, then don't hesitate to add your name to our expert database. You may be invited to take part to AHEAD workshops or surveys. Join us [here!](#)





Visit our [website](#) & follow us on LinkedIn 



Kick-off meeting in Ghent, Belgium, October 2023



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe programme under grant agreement No. 101121338