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Horizon 2050: The World Hitting its Limits

Presenting the *Vigie Report 2026*

Cécile Désaunay and François de Jouvenel

Since 2004 the *Vigie Report* has been the flagship publication of Futuribles International, and the 2026 version was published at the beginning of the year. This 14th edition offers a conspectus of the major trends around which the future will be structured, dividing these into four broad fields: population and settlement patterns, climate and biodiversity, economy and resources, and geopolitics. These major trends are in many cases already well known and thoroughly studied (*e.g.* climate change), but in a segmented way. In foresight studies on which organizations base their strategic orientations, they are often cited as a backdrop but rarely laid out in precise detail nor sufficiently interconnected to foster useful thinking on their implications. This new *Vigie Report* aims to offset these failings by delving deeply into the major dynamics in play—dynamics that are unlikely to change and that imply profound upheavals in our conditions of existence in the years to 2050.

The coordinators of this study, Cécile Désaunay and François de Jouvenel provide here a broad overview of the 2026 edition, which is entitled *Horizon 2050 : le monde face à ses limites. Tendances, choc des visions, scénarios [Horizon 2050: the World Hitting its Limits. Trends, Clash of Visions, Scenarios].* They remind us of the chief megatrends and major structural tendencies specific to the four fields (population and settlement patterns, climate and biodiversity, economy and resources, and geopolitics), as well as the future visions espoused by the actors in each of these areas looking ahead to 2050, showing the diversity of likely responses to the trends identified and their potential influence. Lastly, they present four scenarios that combine these different trends and explore the adaptation pathways that might be envisaged. An indispensable interpretive framework for understanding the trajectories developing within the 2050 time-horizon and for making appropriate preparations.

2100: The Future Revisited

A Collective Foresight Exercise

Jean-Éric Aubert and Denis Lacroix

The *Vigie Report 2026* was published in February by Futuribles International and in this issue we detail its contents. The report focuses on a series of megatrends that are shaping the future and on the scenarios that are likely to evolve around these major developments. On the heels of this report—in late April 2026—came another foresight endeavour also directed towards the study of megatrends crucial for the 21st century, in which the authors—largely from the Foundation 2100, the Société française de prospective [French Foresight Society] and the Plurality University Network—also offer a series of future scenarios. It is the major lessons to be drawn from these works, detailed in the book *Scénarios pour le 21e siècle. Vers le pire ou le meilleur? [Scenarios for the 21st Century: Towards the Worst or the Best Outcome?]* that are laid out here by Jean-Éric Aubert and Denis Lacroix.

After a review of the earlier foresight exercises that inspired their approach, their article outlines the six major types of megatrends identified, relating to the degradation of the biosphere, global demographic developments, technological change, geopolitical upheavals, how global economies are set to react to these changes and their consequences for societies. The authors then set out the various hypotheses adopted in these six areas, which they use to construct different pathways (branching structures) leading to six scenarios, three of them positive (techno-humanist, 'symbiocene', peaceful conditions and reasonable affluence) and three negative (a pluralist overarmed world, techno-enslavement, and local and regional collapses). This foresight exercise, highlighting the prospect of developments toward "stagnant, disrupted and transformed societies", offers a line of thought and a perspective complementary to the work presented in the *Vigie Report 2026*.

In a context of great (mainly geopolitical) instability, it confirms the importance for all our readers and for all those working in foresight and strategy, of taking account of these megatrends that are generally easier to anticipate.

Carbon Cumulative Accounting

Towards a Collaborative Information System for Managing the Transition

Jérôme Boutang and Francis Charpentier

On 10 February 2026, the European Parliament voted to reduce greenhouse gas emissions within the European Union. The aim is for a 90% reduction from the 1990 baseline by 2040, with carbon neutrality being reached by 2050. This revision of the climate law (discussed with the European Council, which will need to approve it) confirms Europe's environmental ambitions and hence the necessity for all economic players to go further on decarbonization. To achieve this, it is essential to have complete, high-quality information on the emissions produced and to see it reported. In this regard, though reporting requirements and environmental and social responsibility (ESR) obligations have been greatly strengthened in recent years, as well as the duty to assess companies' carbon footprints, it is still difficult to estimate the true total emissions generated by a product (direct emissions relating to its design + indirect emissions from further up the value chain—suppliers, energy etc.).

To enhance the information flow in this area and make available the most reliable assessment of the carbon footprint, particularly within companies, one possible option would be to resort to the Carbon Cumulative Accounting method (CCA). This is the move advocated by Jérôme Boutang and Francis Charpentier of Citepa, who outline the aims and methodology of CCA here: "to circulate primary emissions data, step by step, along the value chains", in order to document ever more precisely the greenhouse gas emissions produced at each stage. Besides the concern for exactness, the idea is that, by having available high-quality, verifiable, constantly improving information, lead firms in supply chains, together with public authorities, will also have both a common language and an effective tool for managing their decarbonization. This article presents this collaborative information system, shows how CCA is calculated, together with its advantages and also the forces aiding—and impeding—the advance of this evolving, transition-supporting tool.

Towards Net Zero

How can we Achieve Zero Carbon Emissions?

Jérôme Cazes

Following on from Jérôme Boutang and Francis Charpentier's article in this issue presenting the Carbon Cumulative Accounting method (CCA), we publish a complementary article by Jérôme Cazes demonstrating how these forms of accounting can help to induce economic actors to reduce their emissions and move towards achieving the objectives of decarbonization or 'Net Zero'. On the one hand, the information that comes out of these accounting procedures ought, in his view, to increase the efficiency of the environmental competition between economic actors and induce them consciously to reduce their impact in terms of emissions. On the other hand, this cumulative approach facilitates part of the accounting of environmental impact and, in turn, simplifies the remaining calculations needed to fine-tune the information. He explains this by reviewing the history of carbon-impact accounting over the past 30 years, illustrating this with several macro- and microeconomic examples (national carbon accounts, bottomup accounting, CCA etc.). And he complements this with an analysis of how the carbon impact of financial products is taken into consideration, together with the human impact on natural carbon capture, through dual tracking of production flows (in monetary terms, in carbon terms, and in terms of the trade-offs made between the two). In Cazes's view, these various instruments in the service of Net Zero could be decisive in bringing about virtuous environmental competition, leading companies to reduce their carbon footprint through orthodox market mechanisms. And, as he sees it, Europe, a pioneering player in this field, is best placed to encourage their more widespread adoption.

Restoring Economic Growth in France

Louis Gallois

In the early days of 2026, many experts joined in condemning the French (and European) economies for falling behind their American and Chinese competitors, if not indeed for a general decline. "France is falling off the pace," these experts essentially argued: productive capacities have weakened; offshoring and the lack of investment in research and development have reduced the country's ability to control and secure its supply chains; the erosion of domestic production is reflected in the fact that it produces only 36% of the manufactured goods consumed in France (while between 20% and 25% of French food is also imported). Meanwhile, the share of public debt held by nonresidents is increasing.

"The country is adrift," wrote the economist Christian Saint-Étienne, "France is threatened with a general downgrading." Given this assessment, what is to be done?

Louis Gallois tells us that "growth is the absolutely necessary—though not sufficient—solution to the problems the country is facing". But "growth cannot be achieved by decree". It requires an increase in the volume and quality of work (a higher employment rate among youth and older people, together with controlled immigration) and improved skill levels (education and training). Moreover, "production processes have to be enhanced by technical progress" (particularly, advances in digital technology) and the commitment to research and innovation, which is currently insufficient, must be boosted. There needs to be a new public stimulus to innovation, with an ecosystem of skills and a means of raising the funds essential for developing innovative enterprises. Most importantly, the French population's savings must be mobilized to that end, while care must be taken that austerity policies curb neither household purchasing power nor business investment activity. Gallois makes the further point that "the Chinese industrial bulldozer, held in check in the USA by tariffs, is a systemic threat to European industry", as he lays out a very welcome economic stimulus plan.

The Euro and the Eurobonds Gamble

From Survival to Financial Power?

François-Xavier Chauchat

At the time of going to press (early April 2026), the war begun in Iran by Israel and the USA on 28 February is still ongoing, with, among other consequences, a sharp rise in uncertainty around international trade, the price of energy etc.—all of which leaves international financial markets more fragile. The risk of a major looming economic crisis is a regular topic of discussion. In this context, it is crucial for the EU nations to present a common front, as they managed to do during the Covid crisis, since, as this article by François-Xavier Chauchat shows, after difficulties of historic magnitude—subprime mortgages, the Greek debt and Covid—the Eurozone and its single currency have steered out of dangerous waters and managed to restore confidence in financial circles. The European recovery plan and the mutualization of debt in 2020 gave the European Union new financial heft, and the question now is what comes next. With monetary stability restored, will the Europeans move on to the next stage, financial union? Among the instruments capable of strengthening its integration and its ambitions, the idea of developing the EU's own debt securities (Eurobonds) has been gaining ground and could represent a major step in the consolidation of monetary union.

After reminding us how the Eurozone recovered from its existential crisis, François-Xavier Chauchat sets out the nature of Eurobonds, explaining their advantages (particularly for the European currency and for financing conditions in Europe) and the prospects for their development. Between federal aspirations, pragmatism and political resistance, several scenarios are, as he emphasizes, possible. The underlying question, in a particularly chaotic international context, is the following: does the European Union want merely to survive, or does it want to take the leap and gear up to become a global financial power?

The Future seen from 1986

A Re-reading of *Le Rapport 2026,* 40 Years after the Foresight Exercise

Timothée Fouqueray

Initially published in the United Kingdom in 1984 [as *The 2024 Report*] and subtitled 'A Concise History of the Future, 1974-2024', *Le Rapport 2026* was translated and published in France two years later in 1986, claiming then to present 'a brief history of the future' covering the 50 years between 1976 and 2026. Its author Norman Macrae, a staunchly liberal British economist, had recruited an IT expert and a scientific researcher to assist in its production. In the report, he portrays a world in which technology and genetic engineering have penetrated all areas of society, freeing individuals from geographical constraints, abolishing age barriers, and also the threat of war—in short, a highly optimistic vision of the future, reflecting the neoliberal atmosphere of that 1980s decade. But how do things stand 40 years on? Has the world described by Macrae actually come about? Timothée Fouqueray presents a critical re-reading here of this *Rapport 2026* and the lessons that can be drawn from it for foresight studies.

War or Peace in Europe?

Jean-François Drevet

As this issue of *Futuribles* goes to press, the global geopolitical situation remains extremely turbulent and the media are greatly preoccupied with the conflict in the Middle East. And yet the war that has seen Ukrainians fighting for more than four years on their own soil against Russia continues, and the threat to Europe's security that has loomed over it for more than a decade (since Russia's invasion of Crimea in 2014) remains serious. After 80 years of regional peace, the return of armed conflict to Europe and the exercise of great-power violence marks a paradigm shift for the EU. Is war going to become a part of daily life in Europe and, if so, how is it to be incorporated into its governance (political response, organization of defence etc.)? Or is there a way to (re)construct a lasting peace between the EU and its bellicose neighbours or allies?

It is this alternative that Jean-François Drevet examines here, in the light of some past experiences that enabled a lasting peace to be maintained in Europe. And, after a brief reminder of the pitfalls that led Europe into a situation of 'strategic negligence', he explores ways that it could once again find durable security guarantees, either within the framework of the Atlantic Alliance or through EU solidarity and multilateral diplomacy.

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Its objective is to provide its readers with a better understanding of contemporary societies dynamics, those facts, ideas and trends shaping their medium and long term possible futures.

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