



WeLaR Foresight Webinar

Overview of the WeLaR foresight exercise

26/06/2025

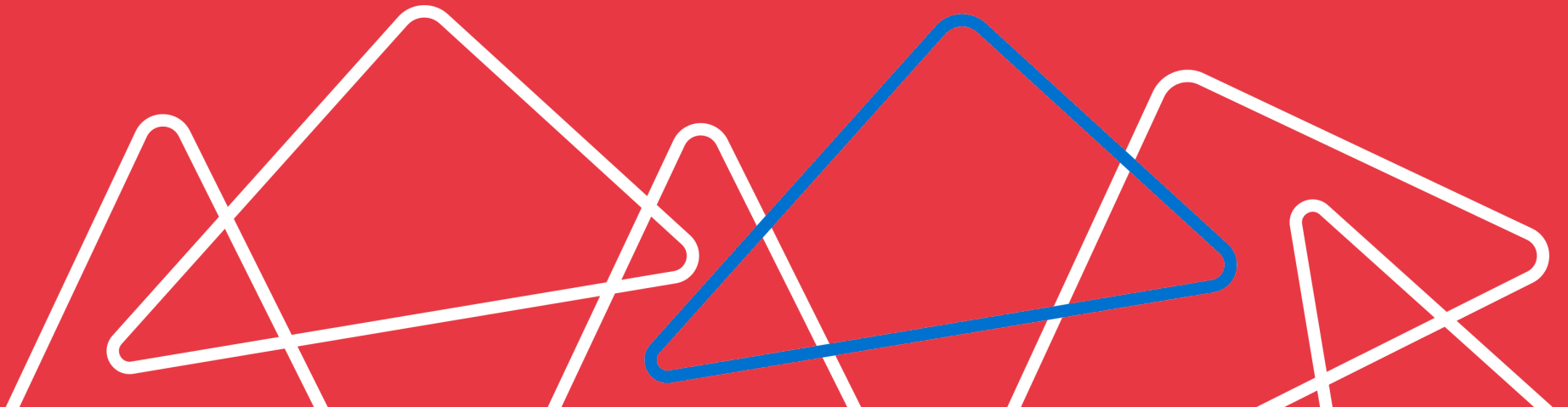
Laurène THIL (HIVA - KU Leuven)



Funded by
the European Union



The WeLaR project



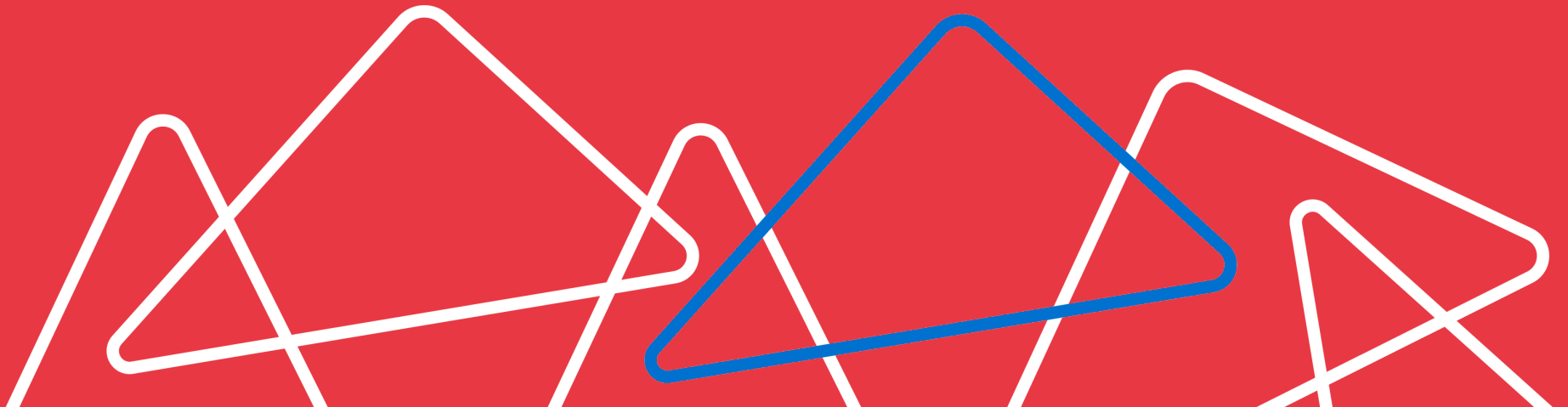
The project



- WeLaR is an interdisciplinary research project examining the impact of four megatrends – **digitalisation, globalisation, climate change and demographic shifts** – on labour markets and welfare states in Europe.
- 24 research papers / 4 policy briefs / 1 foresight report
- Funded by the European Union (Horizon Europe programme)
- 10 partners
- 2022 - 2025



The WeLaR foresight exercice



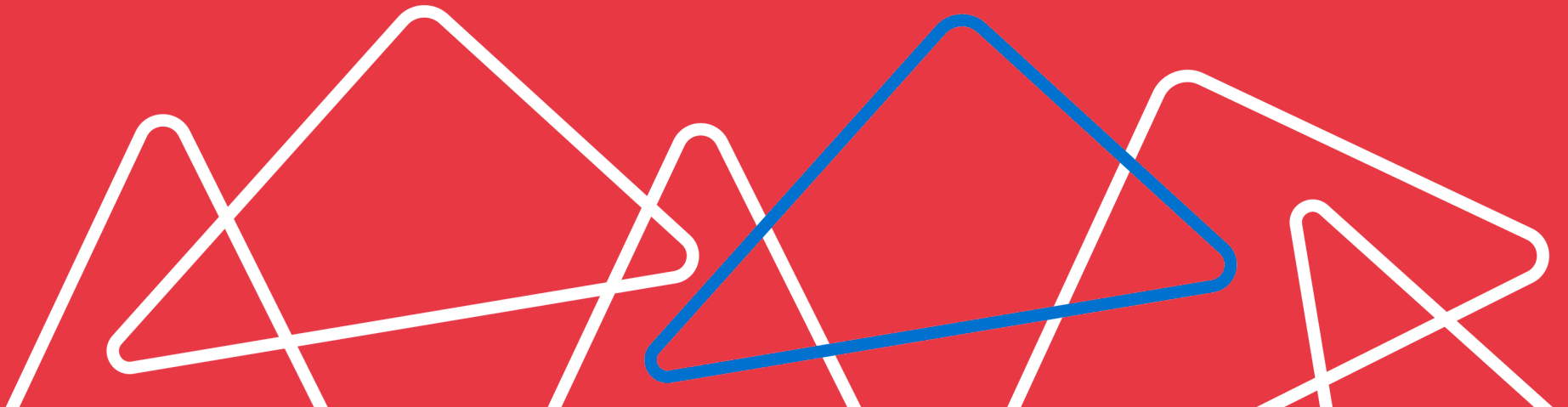
Different steps



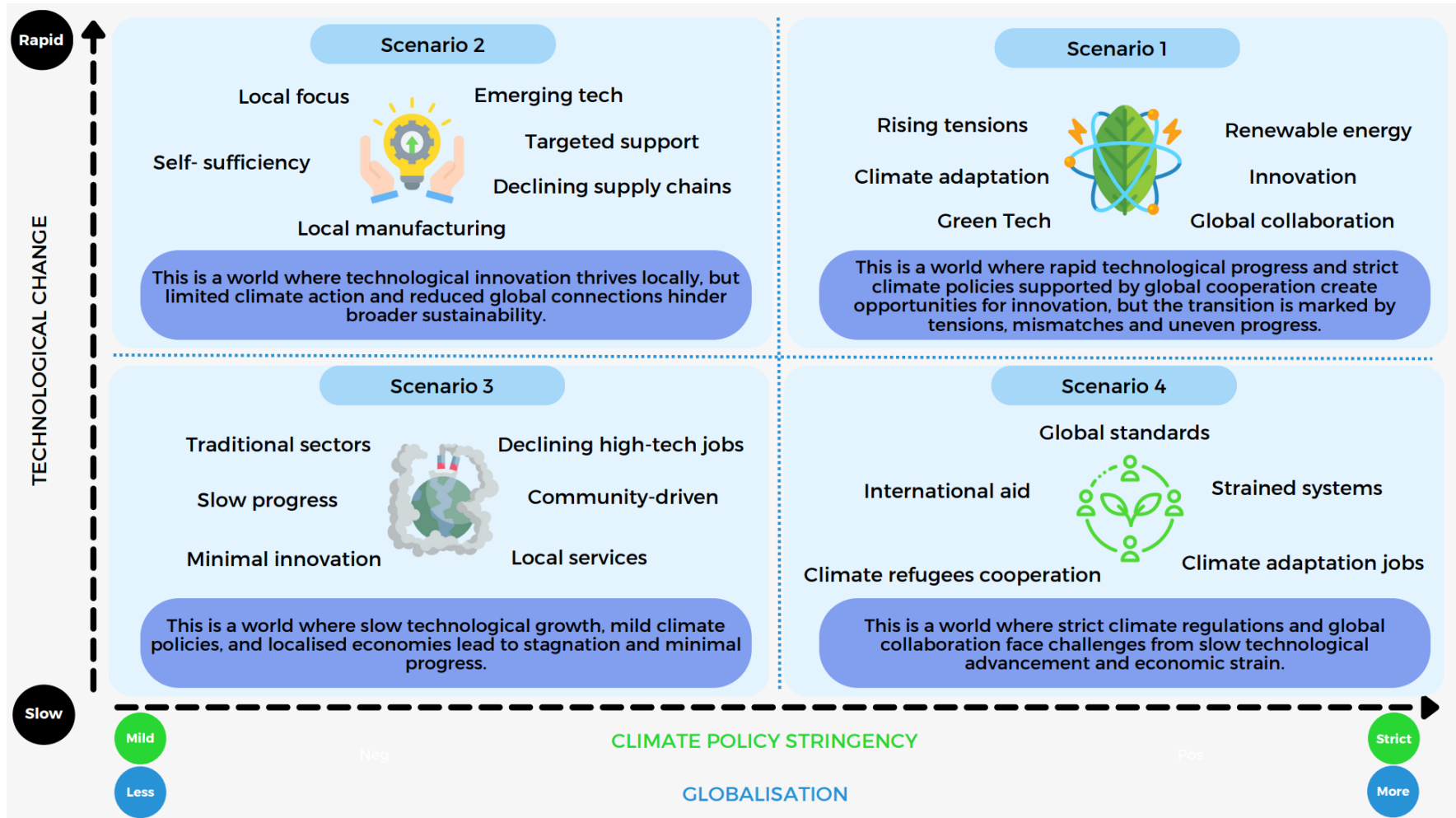
- First workshop to define the scenarios (November 2024 in Brussels)
- First Delphi-like survey (February 2025)
- Second workshop to work on policy recommendations (March 2025 in Vienna)
- Second Delphi-like survey (June-July 2025)
- Final Foresight report (by August 2025)



The first workshop and the Delphi survey



The 4 quadrants – EU by 2040



The 4 quadrants



Axis

- Technological change (slow or rapid)

Technological change refers to the process of developing, adopting, and integrating new technologies that improve efficiency, productivity, and capabilities in various sectors. The **pace** of this change can be **slow or rapid**, impacting economic growth, environmental sustainability, and societal development.

- Climate policy stringency (mild or strict) and link with globalisation (more or less)

Climate policy stringency refers to the **strictness and ambition** of government policies aimed at reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and mitigating climate change.

Hypothesis: Globalisation is perceived as international collaboration between nations.





The Delphi survey



- **Delphi-like survey**
- A **Delphi survey** is a structured communication technique used to gather expert opinions and **achieve consensus on a particular topic**.
- It involves **multiple rounds of surveys** where a panel of experts provides their insights anonymously. After each round, a facilitator summarises the responses and shares the findings with the panel. The experts then revise their opinions based on the collective feedback. This iterative process continues until a **consensus or stable response** is reached.





The Delphi survey



- Online: 11/02/2024 to 28/02/2025
- 72 fully completed surveys
- Presentation of the scenarios developed during the first workshop
- Questions on the likelihood of some outcomes, rating of social outcomes for different demographic groups, likelihood of some assumptions and some ideas of policy recommendations



Scenario 1 - The structured transformation



Scenario 1

Globalisation - More

Climate Policy Stringency -
Strict

Technological change - Rapid

Rising tensions

Climate adaptation

Green Tech



Renewable energy

Innovation

Global collaboration

This is a world where rapid technological progress and strict climate policies supported by global cooperation create opportunities for innovation, but the transition is marked by tensions, mismatches and uneven progress.



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Scenario 1 - Outcomes



Labour market shifts

- Higher-quality, creativity-driven jobs with better flexibility and conditions.
- Automation reduces demand for low-skill labor, impacting traditional sectors.
- Transition programs like universal basic income and retraining help mitigate job losses.

Welfare state challenges

- AI-driven welfare innovations improve targeting and efficiency.
- Redistribution policies support vulnerable groups.
- Welfare demand increases but is managed through technological efficiencies.

Economic and social inequality

- Wealthier regions thrive, while underdeveloped areas face brain drain.
- EU cohesion funds and infrastructure investments aim to reduce disparities.

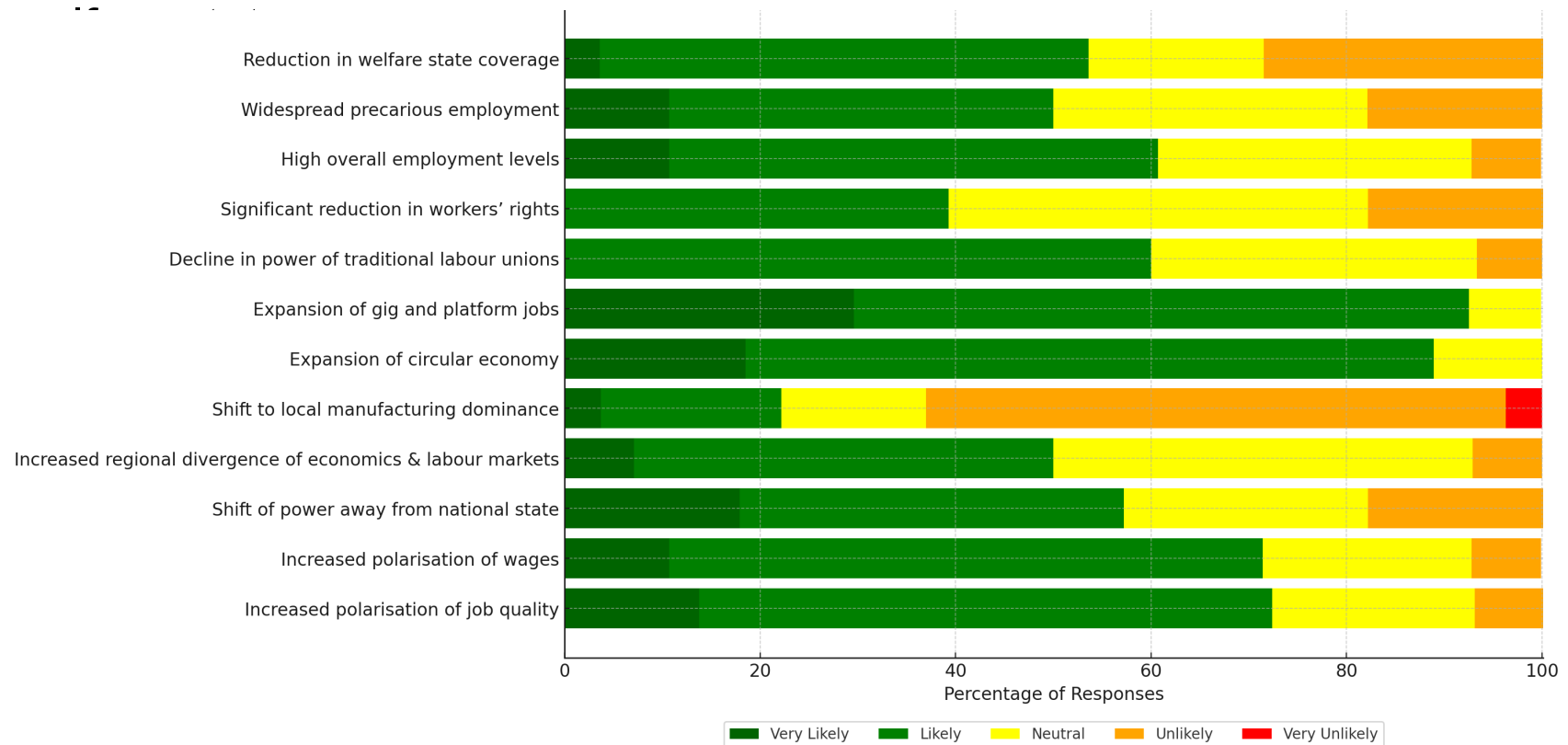


Scenario 1 – Delphi results



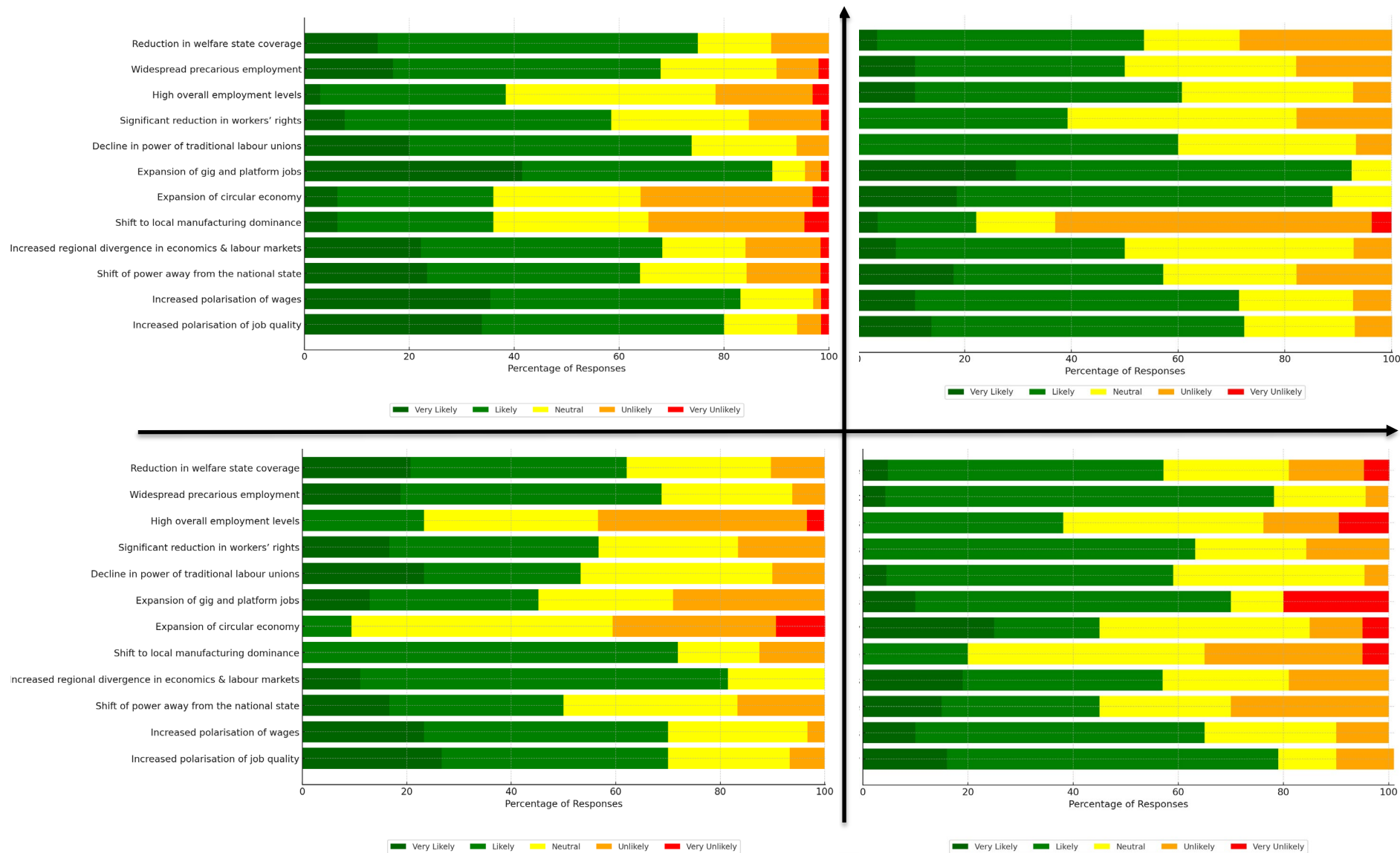
- 2nd most plausible scenario (46%)

Scenario 1 – Likelihood of some outcomes for labour market and



Delphi results

Likelihood of some outcomes for labour market and welfare state

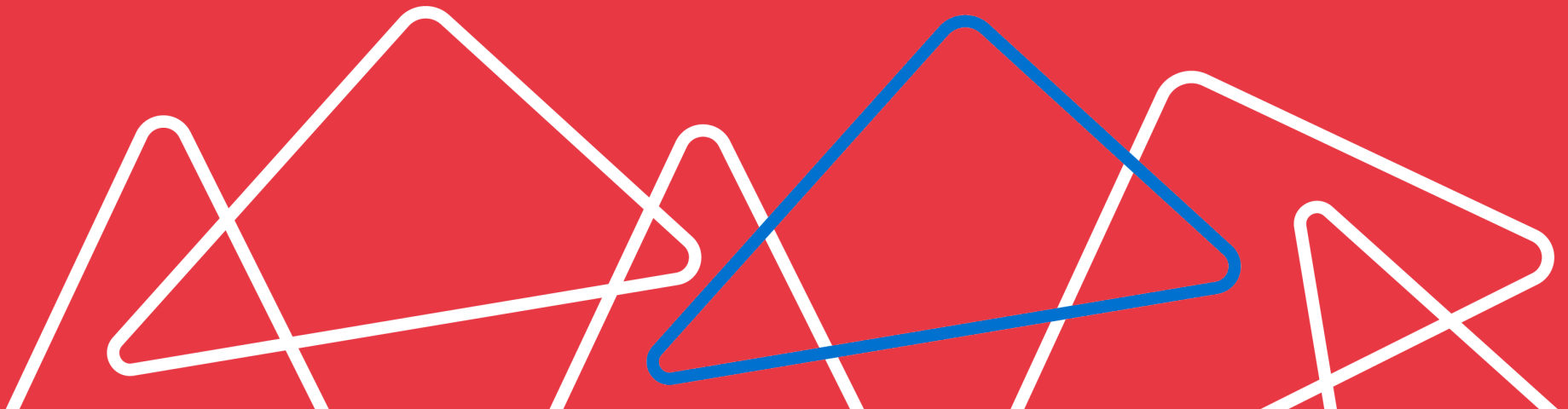


Delphi results

Rating of social outcomes for different demographic groups



The second workshop and the Delphi survey





The second workshop



- Focus on **policy recommendations** for each scenario + policy panel
- How can we achieve positive outcomes by 2040 in each scenario?

- Example for Scenario 3

Context: By 2040, a scenario characterised by slow technological advancement, mild climate policy implementation, and reduced global integration has led to stagnation and limited progress.

2 policy recommendations: one for labour market and one for welfare states





The second workshop



Labour Market Policy: Circular mobility and regional talent retention

Objective: Counteract regional stagnation and brain drain.

Key actions:

1. Structured circular mobility programmes

- **Incentivise temporary migration** of youth for education or work experience abroad (within EU or beyond).
- **Establish structured return pathways**, including financial and career incentives, e.g.:
 - return scholarships or grants,
 - guaranteed job placements or training upon return,
 - tax incentives for returnees who settle and work in their home regions.

2. Regional job attractiveness initiatives

- **Upgrade job quality** and conditions in traditional sectors (e.g. textiles, agri-food, manufacturing) through:
 - investment in digital tools,
 - improved social protection,
 - skills-based career ladders.
- **Promote employer branding** of regional SMEs and family businesses to compete with urban employers.
- **Incentivise community-led innovation**, e.g., local cooperatives, social enterprises, regional green tech initiatives.





Next steps



- Second Delphi-like results by mid-July
 - ➔ Assess the 8 policy recommendations (feasability, impact...)
- Final foresight report by the end of August



WeLaR is Horizon Europe research project examining the impact of digitalisation, globalisation, climate change and demographic shifts on labour markets and welfare states in Europe. It aims to improve the understanding of the individual and combined effects of these trends and to develop policy proposals fostering economic growth that is distributed fairly across society and generates opportunities for all.

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