

RHC Horizon Scan Background

Background

The Regulatory Horizons Council (RHC) aims to inform and make regulatory recommendations around priority areas of emerging innovation. Identifying emerging innovation areas from across the economy is therefore a key input.

The Better Regulation Executive (BRE) conducted an internal horizon scan to capture a large selection of pan-economy innovations likely to come to market over the next ten years. Horizon scanning is used as an overall term for analysing the future: considering how emerging trends and developments might potentially affect current policy and practice. For the RHC's purposes, this exercise generated a data set of emerging innovations, to then be prioritised according to the RHC lens of realising economic and societal benefits using the lever of regulatory reform.

Approach

- The horizon scan took place over a time-limited six-week period in Autumn 2019.
- There was no geographical or sectoral boundary placed on the innovations collected, which encompassed new products, processes and business models
- Innovations were defined as 'technologies with known applications' (for example, AI-enabled smart home devices, rather than AI per se)
- Innovations were collected and manually inputted into a spreadsheet from a range of different publicly available sources (detailed below)
- Innovations were included in the scan so long as they:
 - Were likely to come to market within the next ten years;
 - Had a clear *application, rather than being a technology alone*.

A comprehensive list of the sources consulted is as follows:

1. Google news alerts for: innovation(s), technology, technologies, emerging technology, emerging technologies, technological innovation(s)
2. Technology/business magazines: WIRED, Scientific American, TechCrunch, New Scientist, The Economist, FT, MIT Technology, SciTechDaily, Springwise, Fast Company Compass, Sifted, Bloomberg, Nat Bullard
3. Tech blogs/tech influencers

How to use the spreadsheet

The horizon scan is a spreadsheet of raw data meant as an input to a further prioritisation process. It is not itself a refined output and the context within which it was conducted, as set out above, must be considered if using this data source for further work. All horizon scans will have a particular policy lens. For example, this scanned for innovations rather than technologies, although there is significant overlap. The RHC is publishing the spreadsheet as part of its commitment to an open way of working, encouraging shared learning and collaboration in this space.

The scan was not (nor could it ever be) a fully comprehensive scan of innovations. It provides only a snapshot, collected over a six-week period and using online information sources. The limitations of this approach were accounted for in the [prioritisation methodology](#), which used signals from the often granular and specific data collected to identify trends at a higher level.

Details of the spreadsheet

The innovations tab consisted of 542 innovations, with various characteristics recorded for each innovation. Multiple occurrences of the same or highly similar innovations from different sources were collected as separate lines in the spreadsheet.

The spreadsheet comprised the following information about each innovation, which was manually inputted:

- A brief description of the innovation;
- A second, more detailed, description of the innovation;
- The primary technology and any underlying/enabling technologies;
- An indication of the likely sector(s) affected;
- The estimated Technology Readiness Level (TRL) of the technology, used as a proxy for estimated time to market and confidence rating; and
- Details of the information source.
- A judgement about source reliability