



## The Transformative Power of Economic Democracy

Towards democratic practices in public spending,  
the workplace, urban planning and public services

**3 July 2024**

**09:00 - 16:00 (CEST)**

@ the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC),  
*Rue Van Maerlant 2, 1040 Brussels (Room VMA21)*

### BACKGROUND

The current economic system has resulted in a significant concentration of power in the hands of a few and created record inequality. There is a need for a new **paradigm** — one that provides both a fair outcome and secures a democratic process. **Economic democracy** offers a solution by **giving people agency over their economic activities**, both at the individual and collective levels. If implemented successfully, it can not only bring positive economic results but also strengthen the societal fabric and individual well-being.

In collaboration with the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the Open Society Foundations (OSF), FEPS will organise a conference on **3 July 2024 between 09:00 – 16:00** to discuss approaches and practices that help build and scale up economic democracy. Hosted **at the EESC**, this event will bring together researchers, practitioners, policymakers and activists in the field.

The conference will start with a keynote presentation by Dr. Andrew Cumbers, Dr. Karen Bilsland and Dr. Robert McMaster, the research team from the University of Glasgow, on the **results of the policy study** within the ongoing Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) – Open Society Foundations (OSF) project. This will be followed by several panel **discussions** among practitioners and policymakers **on diverse aspects of economic democracy** including

- Democracy in public spending: Spending for people's well-being
- Democracy at the workplace: Sharing power through employee participation and ownership
- Democratising public services and urban planning: How to make public ownership democratic

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Looking at the examples of successful initiatives on democratising the economy: what were the factors of their success? What are the theories of change that work?
- How to scale up economic democracy practices?
- Who should drive the democratic economic transformation and how to organize it?
- How should governments and public authorities adapt their processes to ensure more democratic oversight and participation in key socio-economic areas?



## AGENDA

**9:00-9:30**      **Registration and Coffee**

**9:30-9:40**      **WELCOME REMARKS**

**László Andor**, FEPS Secretary General  
Open Society Foundations representative (tbc)

### **SESSION 1 – PRESENTATION OF FEPS & OSF POLICY STUDY ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY: ITS FEATURES AND MECHANISMS**

**9:40-10:40**      *Presentation of the study “Building Economic Democracy in Europe: Concepts, Cases and Achieving Progressive Change”* by the research team of the Adam Smith Business School at the University of Glasgow:

- **Andrew Cumbers**, Professor of Political Economy
- **Robert McMaster**, Professor of Political Economy
- **Karen Bilsland**, Lecturer in Organisational Behaviour

*Comments and discussion with:*

- **Barbara Kauffmann**, Director of Employment and Social Governance Analysis Directorate, DG EMPL, European Commission (tbc)
- **Thomas Marois**, Professor Political Economy, McMaster University
- **Joanna Kusiak**, Research Fellow in Urban Studies, King's College, Cambridge University (tbc)
- **Stefan Gran**, Senior Advisor, ETUC

Moderator: **Anna Kolesnichenko**, Economic Policy Analyst, FEPS

**10:40-11:00**      **Coffee Break**

### **SESSION 2: PANEL SESSIONS BY POLICY FIELD SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES TO IMPLEMENT ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY**

**11:00-12:00**      **Panel 1: Democracy in public spending**

How to organise citizen engagement in decision-making on public spending to channel public money towards people's wellbeing and priorities, with:

- **Matthew Brown**, Senior Fellow at Democracy Collaborative, Preston (UK) City Council Leader, former advisor to the Labour Party's Community Wealth Building Unit
- **Reema Patel**, Research Director and Head of Deliberative Engagement at IPSOS, Member of Central Bank Digital Currency Engagement Forum at the Bank of England and Project Manager at the UK Citizens Economic Council



- **Matic Primc**, President and project leader at Organization for participatory society (Slovenia)

*Discussion with the audience*

**12:00-13:00 Panel 2: Democracy at the workplace:**

Sharing the power through employee participation and ownership, with:

- **Isabelle Ferreras**, Professor of sociology at the University of Louvain, Senior Research Associate of the Center for Labor and a Just Economy at Harvard Law School (tbc)
- **Sophia Reisecker**, EESC member, Head of the Department for European and international Affairs and corporations of GPA union (Austria)
- **Kosta Juri**, Head of Research and Policy at IED of the Institute for Economic Democracy (Slovenia)

*Discussion with the audience*

**13:00-13:50 Lunch Break & Networking**

**13:50-14:50 Panel 3: Democratizing public services and urban planning**

How to make public ownership democratic, accountable and resilient, with

- **Anne Le Strat**, Consultant and Lecturer, former Deputy Mayor of Paris in charge of the water policy
- **Claudia Chwalisz**, Founder and CEO of DemocracyNext (tbc)
- **Gemma Gasseau**, water re-municipalisation and citizen participation (tbc)
- **Mirco Beisheim**, Hamburg Energy Remunicipalisation

*Discussion with the audience*

**14:50- 16:00 SESSION 3: POLICIES TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY**

- **Oliver Röpke**, President of the EESC
- **Gabriele Bischoff**, MEP, S&D Group (tbc)
- **Raphaël Glucksmann**, MEP, S&D Group (tbc)
- **Graça Fonseca**, former Minister of Culture and former State Secretary for Administrative Modernization of Portugal, Co-founder and CEO of Because Impact
- **Maria Iglesia Gomez**, Acting Director of Working Conditions and Social Dialogue Directorate, DG EMPL, European Commission (tbc)

*Comments and discussion with the audience*

Moderator: **David Rinaldi**, Director of Studies and Policy at FEPS