

**FEPS**  
FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN  
PROGRESSIVE STUDIES

Annual Activity  
**REPORT 2023**





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## MESSAGE BY THE PRESIDENT



2023 was again marked by Ukraine resisting the Russian invasion, while Europe gradually developed a more comprehensive support and resilience strategy: enlarging NATO, building up European defence capabilities, improving the European security architecture, reducing European energy dependency from Russia and deploying a new economic security package to reduce key vulnerabilities.

Externally, the EU also started looking for allies across continents, going beyond the rivalry between the US and China. Remaining active when dealing with global challenges such as climate change, digital transformation, when promoting trade and investment with better standards and when supporting development was also a matter of concern. Nevertheless, the explosion of the dramatic conflict in the Middle East has made the international situation even more complex, highlighting why the Two-state solution can no longer be postponed

In the meantime, the costs of living became a central problem in Europe due to inflation pressures, deepening social inequalities in spite of the implementation of the recovery and resilience plans which had been launched to overcome the pandemic crisis. These plans were also used to adapt the European Green Deal, the European digital agenda and the European Pillar of Social Rights to the specificities of each region. Nevertheless, this adaptation is unveiling many new problems on the ground, which need to be addressed with deeper understanding and creative solutions.

The aspirations and real life chances of European young people remained under special focus,

Politically, these problems are being instrumentalised by new far-right protagonists using populist arguments to promise solutions which will not deliver because they ignore how important it is to complement local and national action with a stronger European one. This is the case when dealing with security threats, but also when negotiating trade agreements, coping with climate change, shaping the digital transformation or managing migration flows. Nevertheless, there is no fatality of the increasing strength of this far right as it was brilliantly shown by the victory of the pro-European and democratic forces in Poland. Reviving Progressive politics in these troubled waters remained our compass.

All these issues were reflected in FEPS' activities on different fronts, from research and policy consultancy to a rich sequence of publications and public events, mobilizing our team and partners in Brussels and our large network of member foundations. It has been a pleasure to feel reward and recognition, but we keep our ambition to go further in our role as a European Political Foundation.

Maria João Rodrigues  
President



# FEPS IS THE EUROPEAN PROGRESSIVE POLITICAL FOUNDATION

The Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) is **the think tank of the progressive political family at EU level**. Our mission is to develop innovative research, policy advice, training and debates to inspire and inform progressive politics and policies across Europe.

We operate as a thinking hub to facilitate the emergence of progressive answers to the challenges that Europe faces today.

FEPS works in close partnership with its members and partners, forging connections and boosting coherence among stakeholders from the world of politics, academia, and civil society at local, regional, national, European, and global levels.

Today FEPS benefits from a solid network of 74 member organisations. Among these, 43 are full members, 26 have observer status, and 5 are ex-officio members. In addition to this network of organisations that are active in the promotion of progressive values, FEPS also has an extensive network of partners, including renowned universities, scholars, policymakers, and activists.

Our ambition is to undertake intellectual reflection for the benefit of the progressive movement, and to promote the founding principles of the EU – freedom, equality, solidarity, democracy, respect of human rights, fundamental freedoms, human dignity, and the rule of law.

## BACKGROUND

FEPS was created in 2008 as the European-level political foundation associated with – but independent from – the Party of European Socialists (PES) and the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D). Since its creation, FEPS has mainly been funded by the European Parliament.

FEPS was set up to "serve as a framework for national political foundations, academics, and other relevant actors to work together at the European level" (art. 1.4 of Regulation (EC) 1524-2007).

These credentials have made FEPS into an important stakeholder, recognised by foundations and international think tank rankings such as the Pennsylvania Global Think Tank Index. In 2020, FEPS was ranked fourth best party-affiliated think tank worldwide.

In August 2017, FEPS was officially registered with the status of European political foundation (number: EUPF 4BE0896.230.213).

In 2019, FEPS was honoured to be granted Special Consultative Status to the **United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)**, the highest status given by the UN to non-governmental organisations, thus allowing it to participate in the work of the UN.





# FOREWORD BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL



In 2023, FEPS functioned at full capacity. We also started to feel the heat of the upcoming European Parliament elections at the PES' Málaga congress – if not before – which was a great success for our team regarding the organisation of public discussions, dissemination of publications, but also the further development of our network.

The year was still overshadowed by the consequences of the Russian aggression against Ukraine. Several publications, starting from the Progressive Yearbook 2023 to a dedicated volume Europe and the War in Ukraine reflected this drama, which is a real tragedy for millions of Ukrainian families, but also an increasing challenge for EU citizens.

While the battlefield developments of 2022 allowed for some modest optimism due to the withdrawal of Russian troops from Kyiv, Kharkiv and Kherson, the year 2023 saw an arduous war of attrition, high hopes for a counteroffensive and bruising disputes over an emerging stalemate, with all the consequences on domestic politics.

Furthermore, the global context of European politics has become even more dramatic since 7 October, and the resulting war in Gaza. This has been further evidence that our world will not return to status quo ante. One lesson among many is that we need to foster our dialogue with partners in the 'Global South', whether it comes to Africa or Latin-America.

FEPS in 2023 relaunched the Progressive Migration Group. And we increasingly shifted attention to the need for another round of EU enlargement. The 20th anniversary of the famous Thessaloniki summit was marked by a dedicated conference of the Friends of the Western Balkans.

More thinking is needed about Europe's longer-term future. The complex relationship between a revitalised enlargement process and a targeted treaty change became a recurring theme of our discussions, including in a seminar we organised about the European Political Community at the fabulous Villa Vigoni, overlooking Lake Como.

The move towards a reformed modus operandi of FEPS reflected the need for longer-term planning, closer cooperation with our members, and, at the same time, reaching a higher level of financial resilience. We managed to account progress in these fields during 2023. Our members expressed the need for more training activities, and our analysis of contemporary Social Democracy became ever more popular, including in the form of country case studies.

After the first and pioneering FEPS programme on climate, a second one was launched to explore the various social implications of digitalisation, with particular attention to the platform economy. Meanwhile, the FEPS continued moving towards greater outreach through social media and printed products.

Following the years of lockdowns and the intense recovery period, the FEPS team also stabilised in 2023. To foster cohesion, we organised a team journey to Bonn, to visit the headquarters and archives of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and the museum dedicated to Ludwig van Beethoven, author of Ode to Joy, also known as the European anthem. What we learned was obviously very useful when arriving at the 200th anniversary of this immortal and beloved melody.

László Andor  
Secretary General

# CORE MISSION FOR 2023

In 2023, the EU left behind the years of the Covid-19 pandemic but remained heavily entangled with the war in Ukraine. It was also felt that the end of the EU political cycle was coming, and the preparation for a new chapter became increasingly a task for think tanks, and in particular for us, progressives.

The Framework Activity Programme adopted for 2023 set out these annual priorities for FEPS:

- 1) **Shaping the transformations and overcoming the social crisis,**
- 2) **Crafting the scenarios for Europe and the world for the times to come,**
- 3) **Forging the new trajectory for the European integration.**

We applied these transversal priorities in all thematic chapters of our work and also in the growing training portfolio, where matching modules started to accompany the mainstream of our activities.

The right interpretation of the three priority areas is critically important. It should be understood that a set of challenging circumstances that put European cohesion at risk: the enduring cost of living crisis, the disruption of energy and raw material supplies, violent conflicts and a globalised economic warfare are all new developments, together with a looming cold war. Avoiding the latter is vital for progressives, but it will not work without a credible alternative, in the form of a New Global Deal.

The current geopolitical and internal situation in Europe was often described as a multidimensional transformation. Amidst talk on uncertainty and permacrisis, we have promoted a progressive approach, which means that through democratic control, regulation, and investment, social actors can remain masters of their own future. Therefore, however, the achievements of the European integration must be preserved and further developed.

Only in retrospect will become clear at what kind of historical juncture we currently are. With all the threats and challenges on one hand and the opportunities and impulses that result from them on the other, FEPS is determined to deliver on its mandate of reflecting, debating and acting around the three overarching priorities.

Approaching the end of the European political cycle, we are aware that the mission also requires stock-taking: outlining what was delivered out of the political pledges that had been made at the beginning of this European legislative period and what remains to be done. We need to remain engaged in political and policy debates, and deepen our collaboration with academic circles but also other think tanks in Brussels and beyond. This is the way to ensure that what we do is deemed not only interesting but also useful when our political family is warming up to the 'battles' of 2024.

# KEY FACTS AND FIGURES 2023

Despite hopes of recovery post-Covid-19, 2023 proved to be yet another challenging year. Compounded by Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine, a growth in inequalities, feelings of disempowerment, mental health issues, exclusions, and rising domestic violence fuelled what was labelled a 'polycrisis'. This demanded deeper thinking and a coherent vision, not compartmentalised answers, in order to grow the EU's capacity, shape its investments and developmental trajectory, and face its transitional challenges whilst safeguarding its internal position.

As a European think tank of the progressive family, FEPS was mindful of the responsibility to seek new viable political proposals, given the quickly shifting political landscape and the rising strength of radical right and fascist organisations. Thus, we developed a comprehensive strategy in the FAP (Framework Activity Programme 2023): Working together for a strong, solidaristic and sustainable Europe. For the first time, this document was divided into ten thematic fields, ensuring consistency and long-term capacity building, and also featured three guiding priorities for all FEPS' activities in research, events, communication, and training: shaping transformations and ensuring social progress for all, crafting scenarios for Europe and the world, and forging a new trajectory for European integration.

As per thematic fields, the objectives were:

## 1. POLITICAL EUROPE

Examining the potential for reforms of the European Union's architecture (including enlargement), with a mission to deliver progressive ideas to contribute to the steps following the Conference on the Future of Europe and inspire the transition to a new model of integration.

## 2. DEFENDING AND DEEPENING DEMOCRACY

Analysing the main threats to democracy (nationalism, right-wing extremism and authoritarian tendencies) inside but also outside the European Union – in order to find ways to foster participatory and representative democracy.

## 3. SOCIAL EUROPE

Monitoring the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the related Action Plan, as well as identifying additional challenges brought by Covid-19, with an objective to deepen the debate on public health (working towards a genuine European Health Union), decent work and social protection, as also support the fight against poverty and inequality.

## 4. GENDER EQUALITY

Taking stock of the post-pandemic reality with an aim to strengthen the commitment to feminim and gender equality, which should also mean a reorganisation of the care work and jobs, towards a fairer and more sustainable model, as also the elimination of discrimination and violence.

## 5. ECONOMY AND FINANCE

Designing a post-Covid-19 crisis economic development model, with a goal to forge policy proposals for a job-rich recovery, fair transitions and more investment-friendly European fiscal and governance rules.

## 6. ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

Addressing the climate emergency and supporting the implementation of the European Green Deal, with a commitment to search for further equitable ways to attain ambitious climate targets, new green jobs and to better mainstream climate objectives.

## 7. DIGITAL ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

Assessing the nature of accelerated digitalisation of European societies and economies with the aim of exploring how Europe can pick up the autonomous, progressive path towards technological development that serves broader social and economic goals, including here the digitalization of education, media, political participation and public services.

## 8. MIGRATION

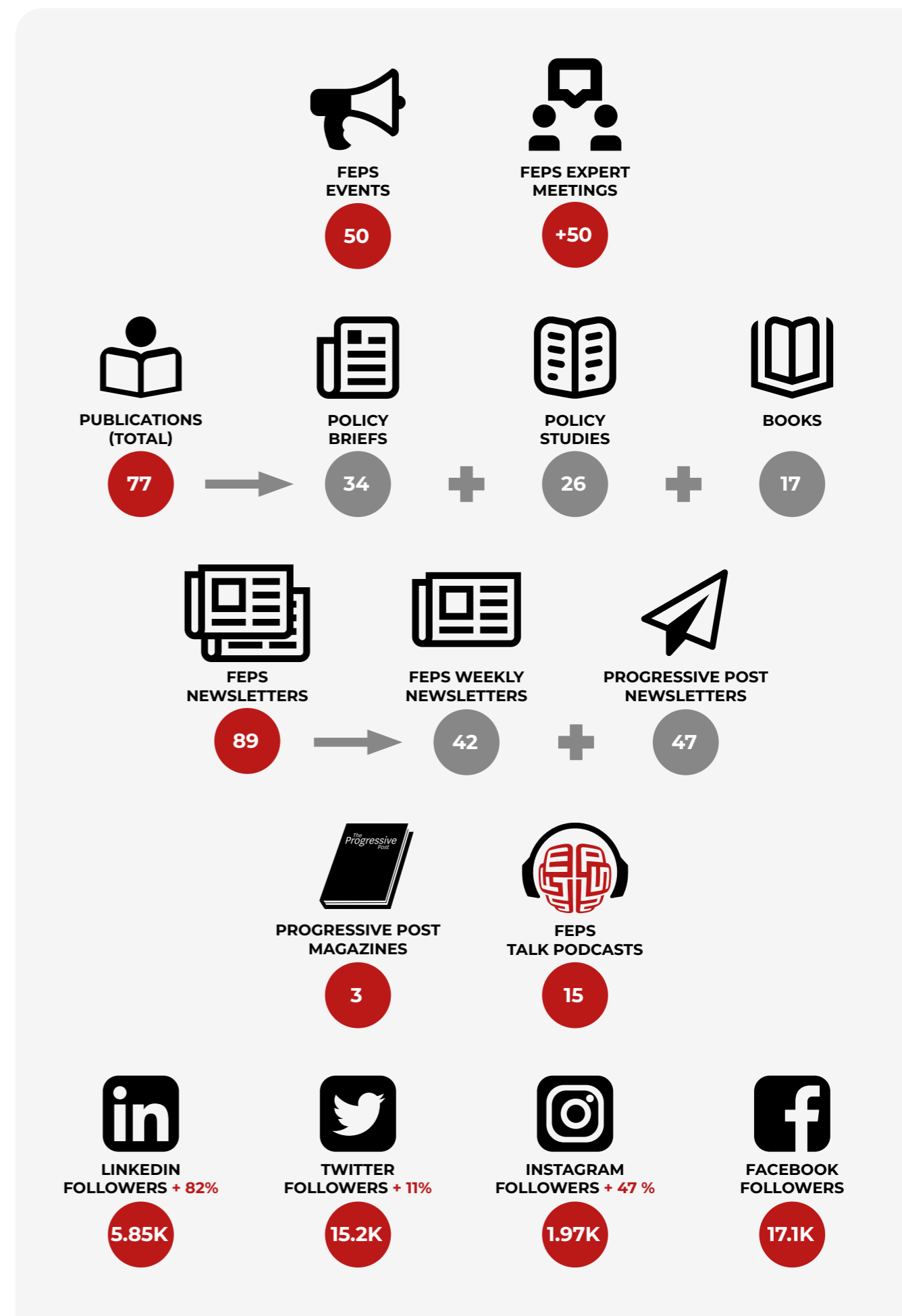
Informing and sustaining the debate on asylum and migration, with a special focus on defining the features of efficient and humane management of migration, bringing the Global Migration Group up to speed again (factoring in the direct and indirect impact that the war in Ukraine will have on migration dynamics).

## 9. EUROPE IN THE WORLD

Supporting global efforts to build a new multilateral order, and with that objective promoting ideas that feed into consolidating the EU's capacity for external action that serve to build its strategic autonomy.

## 10. NEXT LEFT

Evaluating the positioning of Socialist and Social Democratic forces, with a focus on their programmatic and core values, related dilemmas, organisational difficulties and electoral struggles, while helping to define paths to better societal embeddedness, greater political influence, as well as transformative governance.





# FEPS AT WORK: RESEARCH AND STUDIES

## MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

# ECONOMY AND FINANCE



### Ambition

The European economic policy landscape in 2023 was dominated by discussions on the European economic governance framework (fiscal rules) and the need for an EU investment capacity to be able to deliver on the green, digital and social transition. This was overshadowed by the cost-of-living crisis, raising many questions about the adequacy of the existing policy tools. The rising assertiveness of the US and China

spurred intense discussions on European economic security and competitiveness.

FEPS' ambition for 2023 was to support the development of progressive views on European economic governance reform, push for a just and forward-looking recovery, contribute to a better understanding of inflation drivers and promote economic democracy.



### Results

FEPS was actively engaged in the discussion on the new EU fiscal rules, delivering written outputs and taking part in relevant fora. The policy study *EU fiscal rules: time for a reboot* suggested alternative measures for tracking debt sustainability in the EU. This was complemented with a dedicated issue of the *Progressive Post economic governance reform*, with several articles by prominent experts calling for a bigger and permanent EU investment capacity and the need for more flexibility in the fiscal framework for member states. We have helped organise a discussion on the topic at the EP Committee for Economic and Monetary Affairs, bringing top experts (Philippa Sigl-Glöckner and Shahin Vallée) to promote and explain progressive proposals. We were also actively engaged in discussions on the topic at the PES Financial and Economic Network.

A thematic complement to this work was our ongoing *Recovery Watch* series, where we published studies that analyse the effectiveness of RRF governance model ('Governing the RRF') and argue for a 'permanent RRF' ('Making Next-Generation EU a permanent tool'). The RRF model is a new development in the EU policy design, both in terms of the size of its ambition, but also the set of tools it is using, and we would like to help this instrument to succeed and become a long-term solution for EU funding to be built upon it.

We could not stay aside from the discussion on the cost-of-living crisis, and organised, in May 2023, together with the London School of Economics a high-level expert seminar *The macro-economic impact of the cost crisis: lessons for Europe* (see the case box). We published a policy brief summarising the discussion and proposing progressive ideas for dealing with inflation. It has become clear that the usual monetary policy instruments are inadequate for dealing with supply-side price shocks. Therefore, we decided to continue our work on the topic and initiated a project to discuss different instruments that can be used to fight inflation (implemented in 2024).

In 2023 we organised two major events as part of the Progressive Economics Network (PEN): one in Washington DC in spring and another in Brussels in September (see the case box). We started PEN in 2022 with FES and Das Progressive Zentrum to bring together high-level progressive-leaning policy advisors in national European governments and the US to foster common policy approaches and cooperation. In 2023, our main theme for PEN was industrial policy: how to shape it in a way that would strengthen European industrial capacity and benefit all regions and stakeholders, without creating losers and new divisions within Europe.

In October 2023, we became one of the co-organisers of the 'Tax the Rich' campaign. Registered as a

European Citizens Initiative, the campaign aims to collect one million signatures within a year to ask the European Commission to introduce a legislative initiative to tax the ultra-rich. Building on our 2021 prominent study on the wealth tax *A European wealth tax for a fair and green recovery*, we continue to advocate for an introduction at an EU level of a wealth tax to deliver social justice and give the EU resources to finance the green transition.

To follow up on our ambition to promote economic democracy, in 2023, we launched a project on the topic. The project is shaped around a study of practices of economic democracy, but also aims to facilitate the interaction of practitioners and policy community and make FEPS a visible player in the field.





## HIGHLIGHT 1 // THE MACRO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE COST CRISIS – LESSONS FOR EUROPE

### POLICY BRIEF AND EVENT

We organised, in May 2023, together with the London School of Economics and FES a high-level expert seminar 'The macro-economic impact of the cost crisis: Lessons for Europe'. At a full-day (closed) event, prominent economists presented diverse aspects of monetary policy and inflation, discussing the drivers of inflation and the efficacy of the policy response. One of the main conclusions of the discussion was that monetary policy needs an upgrade of its tools: more forward-looking forecasting and more granular data on inflation drivers, notably profits. The second major conclusion: monetary policy is not enough and needs to be accompanied by other policies (notably fiscal) to be able to deal with supply-side shocks. Based on the discussion at the seminar, FEPS Policy Analyst Anna Kolesnichenko prepared a policy brief 'The macro-economic impact of the cost crisis'.



## HIGHLIGHT 2 // PROGRESSIVE ECONOMICS NETWORK (WASHINGTON DC & BRUSSELS MEETINGS)

### EVENTS

In 2023, we organised two major events as part of PEN – one in Washington DC in spring, on the fringes of the IMF-World Bank spring meetings, and another in Brussels in September. For the Washington meeting, we brought a group of around 20 European policymakers and advisors for a full day of meetings. While being high-level, the discussions were quite frank and cordial, openly talking about concerns from both sides of the Atlantic. The focus was on trade and industrial policy. Heather Boushey, a member of the Council of Economic Advisers at the White House, made

an encouraging pitch, suggesting the Biden administration policies offered many opportunities for jointly advancing a progressive agenda.

The September meeting in Brussels focused more on European industrial policy and how to finance it. Participants shared their country's experiences in devising and implementing industrial policy. A need for more regional assistance, both financial and in capacity building, emerged as a main demand for the evolving industrial policy, as did a need for EU-level financing.



# POLICY CONTRIBUTIONS



### RECOVERY WATCH SERIES Governing the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)

#### POLICY STUDY

The study by Jonathan Zeitlin, David Bokhorst and Edgars Eihmanis, assesses the effectiveness and democratic legitimacy of the RRF's design, by analysing its functioning during the drafting, implementation and monitoring of the National Recovery and Resilience Plans (NRRPs) in eight member states (Belgium, Croatia, Estonia, Italy, Latvia, Portugal, Slovakia and Spain). Based on interviews with national policymakers and European Commission officials, it looks at the extent to which governments took ownership of the plans, the inclusivity of their drafting and the role of the Commission in steering the process. The study also assesses how RRF governance has affected domestic policymaking, what obstacles have arisen in the implementation process and how monitoring by the Commission works in practice, with particular attention to its interpretive flexibility and administrative load. Being one of the first assessments of the RRF and presented in a workshop with the participation of the Commission representatives, the study gave timely feedback regarding the needed adjustments in RRF program steering.



### RECOVERY WATCH SERIES Making Next-Generation EU a permanent tool

#### POLICY STUDY

The study by a group of authors led by Jérôme Creel argues for creating a permanent EU fiscal and investment capacity. A permanent tool would support growth and resilience-oriented reforms in the member states, provide resources for macroeconomic stabilisation purposes and give the EU a capacity to finance the provision of EU public goods. The authors argue that only the production of European public goods financed by a truly European tax system, not by national contributions, would enable the creation of a genuinely democratic basis for the EU. A permanent tool could be established either by the revision of treaties or by the establishment of new intergovernmental arrangements. The authors propose the creation of a European Public Investment Agency capable of planning and implementing investment projects in cooperation with member states.



# FEPS AT WORK: RESEARCH AND STUDIES

## MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

# ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE



### Ambition

As recent heatwaves, forest fires, and instances of water rationing in Southern Europe demonstrate, the effects of global heating are no longer a distant possibility. As climate change threatens human well-being in Europe and across the world, limiting the cataclysmic disruptions resulting from our impact on this planet is now more critical than ever. Furthermore, the energy crisis that has been unravelling against Russia's invasion of Ukraine adds further urgency and additional complexities to our efforts to achieve a clean and sustainable future. One certainty that emerges from this complex background is that transforming our societies and economies in a way that integrates concern for nature and respects the planet's carrying capacity is a colossal task. Importantly, this task is a political endeavour rather than a technological undertaking or the mere transposition of international agreements and targets. Progressives need to shape the transformation by integrating values like fairness, equality and respect across all aspects of the green transition.

Hence, considering this significantly changed context, the activities of the FEPS climate portfolio in 2023 were structured under the following three pillars:

- **Just Transition with a thematic focus on adopting a progressive territorial perspective**, and the impact of the European Green Deal on the labour market, as well as the progressive policy action needed to improve synergies between climate and socio-economic policies.

The focus is on the domestic sides of the just transition, and our activities pay specific attention to structural socio-political and economic transformations, including local community engagement and participation.

- **Global Climate Justice to look at the EU climate, environmental and energy agendas in their relationship with the rest of the world**; it is, for instance, relevant to understand the implications of recent policy developments for EU-US and EU-China relations as well as for Africa and the MENA region.
- **Managing the energy turmoil**, as one of the more complicated and pressing challenges from a political and policy viewpoint. The work on energy covered different themes, notably the citizen perspective, to focus on energy rights and energy poverty, innovation for Europe, to shape the institutional and investment choices of the Union scaling up renewables and clean energies, and, finally, the geopolitics of energy, focusing on supply-side issues due to the war in Ukraine and the impacts of the EU's policy responses on global politics.

Many interrelations and synergies were evident from the onset even between these three pillars, therefore making space for developing complementary epistemological communities: strengthening a network of experts and policymakers that can easily share ideas.

### Results

The year 2023 gave FEPS the opportunity to both expand upon old projects and start new ones in the framework of the FEPS-FES Climate Programme. As an example of the former and together with the Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership, FEPS published a study on The path towards a socially just Fit for 55 package assessing how the inclusion of social issues in climate policies has evolved following

the European Commission's proposal. This Policy Study focuses primarily on the European Parliament negotiations on four policy files: the CO2 emission performance standards for new passenger cars and new light commercial vehicles, the Renewable Energy Directive (RED), the Energy Efficiency Directive (EED), and the Emissions Trading System (ETS) for buildings and transport.

Thinking globally, FEPS also looked into the international dimension of EU policy through the organisation of a seminar on the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) with the participation of partners from one of the world's rising industrial powers, India. As this policy enters its implementation phase, it's essential to think of strategies to make the measure inclusive and avoid exacerbating inequalities with the Global South. Hence, this event focused on the impact of this policy on the trade relations between the EU and the global South and discussed its implications in the big scheme of the fight against climate change. The apparent trade-off between penalising industrial carbon emissions and punishing those countries most vulnerable to the effects of climate change was explored through two thematic panels, the outcome of which will be published in the form of a Policy Brief in 2024.

And finally, the participation of FEPS in multiple international engagements is worth highlighting. The probably most important of them was the participation in the Beyond Growth Conference, organised at the European Parliament in May 2023. With a clear message emphasising the need to rethink our society to adapt to the challenges of the future, FEPS contributed by co-organising two panels and, in collaboration with our partners, hosted a delegation of Eastern European civil society representatives. We were also present in the 7th edition of the European Forum of Left, Green and Progressive Forces in Madrid in July 2023, where we worked together with the Green European Foundation and Transform!Europe to present our view on the role of the state and energy policy to a multinational audience, and in the Afrikadag in Amsterdam, November 2023, promoting the idea of climate justice at world level and with Africa in the scope.

### HIGHLIGHT 1 // COMING TOGETHER FOR A JUST TRANSITION

#### EVENT

Together with several partners, including Solidar, Asamblea de Cooperacion por la Paz and Movimiento por la Paz, el Desarme y la Libertad, FEPS worked with civil society stakeholders to assess the implementation of policies addressed to strengthen the social fabric of the European Union in this time of socio-economic transition resulting in multiple events and publications through the year. A highlight is the organisation on 11 July of the high-level *Coming together for a Just Transition forum* in Valladolid, Spain. Counting with the attendance of Teresa Ribera and Zakia Khattabi, ministers for climate from Spain and Belgium, FEPS joined the Just Transition Platform network to prepare and present them with a call for action asking for further emphasis in a just transition in the framework of the Spanish and Belgian presidencies of the Council of the EU in 2023 and 2024.



### HIGHLIGHT 2 // ENSURING A JUST TRANSITION IN TIMES OF INDUSTRIAL TRANSFORMATION

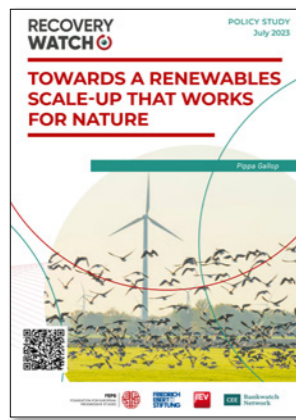
#### EVENT

Connecting with our work on the Just Transition, and building on the strong collaboration between FEPS, the CEE Bankwatch, and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, FEPS concluded 2023 with a joint workshop under the title *Ensuring a Just Transition in times of industrial transformation*. This large, interactive event aimed to contribute to the construction of a community centred around knowledge-sharing, the generation of new ideas, networking, and enhancing the visibility of the practical knowledge available at hand to achieve a Just Transition in the context of the EU's green industrial transformation. The many participants were invited to contribute to the ongoing discussion through a series of breakout working groups addressing practical issues affecting the just transition movement: How to improve monitoring committees, how to enhance the

transformative potential of the just transition funding, how to construct a socio-ecological welfare system, how to institutionalise the just transition in the new EC's workplan, and how to bridge faults in the just transition movements.

The outcomes of each of these debates, already presented at the end of the workshop, will be published and disseminated in 2024. This event and publication continue applying the model already implemented the previous year, which resulted in the publication of a Policy Brief in 2023 under the title *Improving territorial justice: Transparency, inclusiveness, capacity building and strategy in the Territorial Just Transition Plans* collecting the outcomes and learnings from a similar workshop at the end of 2022.

# POLICY CONTRIBUTIONS



RECOVERY WATCH SERIES  
**Towards a renewables scale-up that works for nature**

## POLICY STUDY

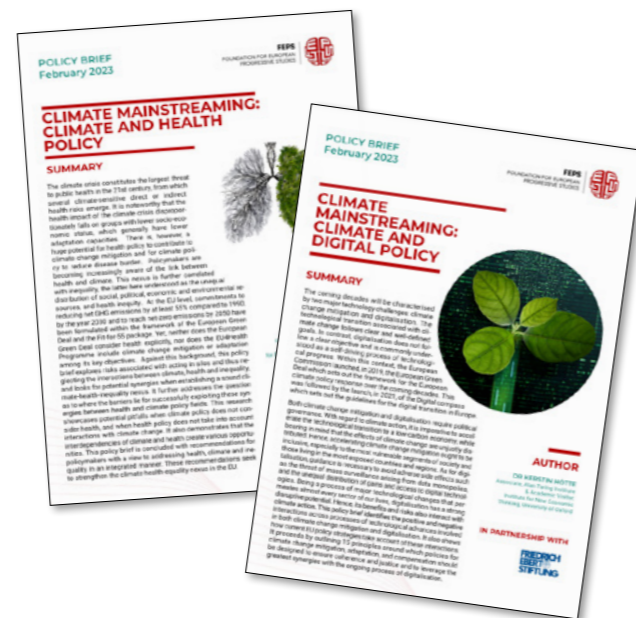
The Policy Study, written by Pippa Gallop and in collaboration with FES, Institut Emile Vandervelde and CEE Bankwatch, shows how selected Central and Eastern EU member states plan to use recovery funds to speed up renewable energy deployment, and analyses the impact this will have on nature. We examine recent changes in EU renewable energy rules, aimed at a much-needed acceleration in renewable energy deployment. The principal idea behind these new rules is sound: by better mapping environmentally sensitive locations and establishing 'acceleration areas' in places where impacts are expected to be low, the development of renewable energy and biodiversity protection can go hand in hand, and potential conflicts can be avoided at an early stage. The main conclusion of this study argues that the biodiversity and climate emergencies must be tackled together and that trade-offs between renewable energy and biodiversity can and must be reduced to an absolute minimum. It demonstrates that, even if better implementation of EU environmental and public participation legislation is sometimes needed at the national level, these are already flexible enough to achieve a balance and allow the appropriate development of renewable energy.



CLIMATE MAINSTREAMING SERIES  
**Breaking down the silos**

## POLICY BRIEF SERIES

Climate change is a systemic issue that cannot be addressed by siloed thinking and policymaking. Promoting a holistic approach means managing the interdependencies between different policy fields. To address this challenge, FEPS, together with FES, has published a series of four Policy Briefs targeting each one of four dimensions of this issue: With Carl Knight (University of Glasgow, UK) on **Climate Justice**; with Willi Haas (Institute of Social Ecology, Austria), Christina Lampl, Ernest Aigner and Andrea E. Schmidt (Competence Centre Climate and Health, Austria) on **Climate and Health policy**; with Gill Alwood (Nottingham Trent University, UK) on **Climate and Gender policy**; and with Kerstin Hötte (University of Oxford, UK) on **Climate and Digital policy**. To present each of the briefs, FEPS also hosted a series of 'policy breakfast' webinars in which the authors had the chance to discuss their findings with academics, policymakers and representatives of civil society.



**The road to a just transition: a comparative analysis of territorial Just Transition plans**

## POLICY BRIEF

Territorial Just Transition Plans define the territories where the Just Transition Fund will be used. These territories are identified through a dialogue with the Commission. These plans set out the challenges in each territory, as well as the development needs and objectives to be met by 2030. They identify the types of operations envisaged and specify governance mechanisms. The approval of the territorial just transition plans opens the doors to dedicated financing under the other two pillars of the Just Transition Mechanism.

This policy brief analyses the Territorial Just Transition Plans (TJTPs) of seven countries (Austria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Greece and Sweden) with the aim of understanding the envisioned just transition in these regions. The brief scrutinises and evaluates the economic, environmental and social aspects of the plans to map the kind of justice to be expected from their implementation. It finds that the TJTPs primarily direct funding towards economic policies, with the aim of supporting SMEs and large corporations to decarbonise and generate or maintain employment opportunities in the regions. There are lesser investments in environmental policies, mainly focused on the decontamination of polluted land, and social policies, such as elderly and childcare.

The TJTPs can be grouped into three categories. The first group has a relatively balanced approach in dividing investments among economic, social and environmental policies. The second group focuses mostly on economic policies and decarbonising large corporations and SMEs. The last group mostly focuses on environmental policies. The envisioned justice in the TJTPs is primarily directed towards employment opportunities; this poses the risk of benefitting people and organisations that already receive support from the European Commission. A different kind of justice, one focused on improving social conditions, could be better positioned to help those who are typically left behind.



**The path towards a socially just fit for 55 package**

## POLICY STUDY

Climate policies need to be socially just to be widely accepted and, therefore, effective in driving the transformation towards climate neutrality. In recent years, the deteriorating climate crisis has underscored the importance of urgent and ambitious action to reduce emissions. Therefore, the EU has announced a climate neutrality target for 2050 and launched the European Green Deal.

This policy study, co-authored by Sanna Markkanen, Krisztina Zalnoky and Francesco Giannelli, assesses how the inclusion of social issues in climate policies has evolved during the approximately twelve-month period by focusing primarily on the European Parliament negotiations on four climate policy files that could have significant positive or negative social impacts:

1. the CO2 emission performance standards for new passenger cars and new light commercial vehicles;
2. the Renewable Energy Directive (RED);
3. the Energy Efficiency Directive (EED); and
4. the Emissions Trading System (ETS) for buildings and transport.

Certain social issues gained prominence during the parliamentary negotiations of the selected Fit for 55 package files. The results of the quantitative analysis reveal that each of the selected files has a slightly unique focus on social aspects.

The EU's Fit for 55 package could have the potential to drive a socially just transformation towards a climate-neutral economy. However, to deliver on this, it is more important than ever to strengthen solidarity among the member states and embed social considerations into the key climate policy files.



# FEPS AT WORK: RESEARCH AND STUDIES

## MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

# DIGITAL AND INDUSTRIAL POLICY



### Ambition

After the launch of Chat GPT at the end of 2022, the generative AI hype reached a fever pitch in early 2023. While the European legislators were dealing with how to react to these developments in the AI Act, at FEPS we were discussing our Digital Programme with our Nordic Partners. Together with these member foundations, we decided to take a specific angle to the AI revolution, which is that of the workers. This algorithm-in-the-workplace approach was a natural follow-up to the work we did on platform work where riders are confronted with algorithmic management in its purest form. In this two-year programme, we investigated the impact of this new wave of automation on workers at a timely moment when the European Commission announced it is taking the first steps towards a legislative proposal on AI in the workplace. At the same time, our research on algorithmic management would feed into

the discussions on the Platform Work Directive, another priority legislation dealing with the precarious working conditions of millions of Europeans.

Also, we took on the task of thinking about the long-term strategic choices for Europe to find its model in the digital transition. While the current European Parliament term marked an active European legislator who actively tried to become the global front-runner in regulating big tech, it remains a technology taker from firms outside of Europe. We organised a community of experts to interact with policymakers to overcome this challenge and find ways to create a public digital infrastructure for our (semi-) public services in Europe and get to a different model for the data economy where citizens regain control over their data, so it can be used for the common good.



### Results

2023 was the first year of the Digital Programme on algorithms in the workplace, and a huge part of the work consisted of setting up the research by selecting the research teams for the three different research strands and the Nordic countries. These strands are: a) the company/sector case studies in algorithmic management in Finland, Sweden and Norway; b) the workers' survey in the four Nordic countries; c) a data-driven analysis of platform work in Denmark (the data collection started in 2023). More than 5.000 workers filled in our survey on how algorithmic management affects their workplace. Two policy studies were written (published in January 2024). One is based on the existing literature and the input of our roundtable in Oslo in April and the Stockholm conference in September, and another on the data analysis of the developments in platform work. Two more policy studies will follow in the spring of 2024, together with seven national reports in the respective Nordic languages.

On the more strategic long-term work, we had two critical moments. First was a review meeting of the digital portfolio of FEPS in September, where we gathered a select group of experts and policymakers to discuss the next steps in FEPS research and EU policymaking in the coming years. This meeting was followed up by two conferences on 6 and 7 December, together with respectively the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and the S&D Group, where we had a lively and timely discussion about the institutions needed in the digital age of AI, followed by a full-day in-depth conference on the different aspects of Europe's Digital Model.

Besides this, two major projects of 2022 were finished in 2023. One, on the future of work with our member Progressive Britain, with several roundtables in Stockholm, Berlin, Brussels and Westminster, led to a policy study on work politics in the age of 'unpeace'. Another project on the quick-commerce sector and dark stores together with our trade union partner UNI Europa led to the publication of two policy studies in March 2023: one on the functioning of this specific sector of platform work, and one on the strategies for organising the riders and other workers in this sector.

It is worth mentioning that several other digital outputs were produced, for example, a dossier for the Progressive Post on regulating AI as a technological and political feat, a policy study for the Recovery Watch series on the investments from the RRF in the digital transition in the sectors of healthcare and education and a policy brief on climate mainstreaming on climate and digital policy.

### Review meeting on the digital Policy portfolio.

At the invitation of our FEPS president Maria João Rodrigues, we gathered the leading policymakers in the field of digital for the S&D Group to a strategic reflection on the long-term approach to the digital transition in Europe. During this closed-door roundtable at the FEPS office, we invited several key experts to present their work and discuss the need for public digital infrastructure investments and the need to change the data economy through a system of data intermediation services to give Europeans control over the use of their private data. The meeting was prepared with a strategic note, and the outcomes were fed into the long-term work of FEPS on the European digital policy in the next legislative term through our input on the PES manifesto and the commission work plan discussions.





## HIGHLIGHT 1 // LED BY MACHINES - LAUNCH CONFERENCE OF THE FEPS-NORDICS DIGITAL PROGRAMME ON ALGORITHMIC MANAGEMENT AND WORKERS' RIGHTS

### EVENT

On 23 September, FEPS and their Nordic partners gathered in Stockholm for the public launch of the Digital Programme on AI in the Workplace. At the office of the LO Sweden Trade Union Confederation, we gathered about 80 participants for a full-day conference on algorithmic management. Our distinguished speakers came from different. There, we gathered about 80 participants from around Europe with diverse backgrounds in policy and academic research and many trade union experts from the Nordic countries. The speakers included experts from the OECD, top universities around Europe, the trade union leadership, several former ministers of member states and members of the Swedish and the European Parliament.

The event was streamed online to make it accessible to people outside Stockholm.



## HIGHLIGHT 2 // SHAPING EUROPE'S DIGITAL MODEL: BUILDING ALLIANCES FOR A PROGRESSIVE EUROPEAN VISION

### EVENT

Together with the S&D Group in the European Parliament, we gathered experts from civil society and academia for a full-day conference on 7 December. On this day, we created a space for interaction on the main topics of digital policy where the policymakers could reflect on the legislative action taken or underway and what more should be done for Europe to find its approach to the digital transition, which is human-centric, respects workers' rights and benefits society as a whole.

We discussed how to break out of a world of work where technology is further exacerbating power imbalances between workers and employers; how to curb the monopoly power of Big Tech firms that turn the work and data of millions of creators and citizens into privately controlled AI services; how long-term public investment and green and digital industrial strategies can help align digital transformation with progressive values; and how to grow pan-European public digital infrastructures and services.



# POLICY CONTRIBUTIONS



### Back to the Dark Ages? Q-commerce, rapid retail and the changing landscape of retail work

#### POLICY STUDY

In March 2023, FEPS and Uni Europa published a policy study on the quick-commerce sector in three countries: Germany, Spain and the UK. The Covid-19 pandemic led to a boom in the online grocery market, with the emergence of new q-commerce startups delivering from 'dark stores' and promising super-fast delivery times. The policy study draws on qualitative research with workers to provide insights into the working conditions of riders and other workers in this new sector of the platform economy. The study also reflects on the business model of these companies and how the unsustainable business case of ten-minute grocery puts undue pressure on workers. Even though most of the workers in this sector did get zero-hours contracts and were, therefore, in an employment relation with the platform, this did not result in less precarious working conditions. We saw algorithmic management in its purest form, where workers could be fired (no longer scheduled) without human interference, and the pressure of the algorithm on workers to timely deliver could lead to health and safety issues and severe road accidents. We presented this study to key policymakers in the European Commission and Parliament with a clear link to the Platform Work Directive negotiations, showing that the presumption of an employment relation is only part of the solution and a limit to the adverse effects of algorithmic management should be set by the European legislator.



### RECOVERY WATCH SERIES Is the digital transition a lever for structural reforms or does it reinforce the divide?

#### POLICY STUDY

Remote learning allowed 65 million EU students to continue studying. While millions of citizens were "traced, tracked and, eventually, treated" at a distance during the pandemic thanks to technological progress. However, this health crisis has also shown that digitalisation can be a double-edged sword.

This policy study analyses the contribution of the Recovery and Resilience Facility to using technologies as a lever to improve access to public services. It shows that the Member States that are frontrunners in digitalisation invested more of the funds in digitalising healthcare and education, potentially increasing the digital divide in the EU.



# FEPS AT WORK: RESEARCH AND STUDIES

## MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

# SOCIAL EUROPE



### Ambition

For the year 2023, FEPS aimed to spearhead transformative initiatives across social policies, **employment, health, and well-being**, shaping a more inclusive and equitable EU. Central to our mission is continuing to work on the **European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) and the Social Action Plan**, transforming the EU into a real machine that delivers values for its citizens.

Accompanying the developments of the EPSR and mainstreaming it across EU action, respond to the FEPS annual priority **Forging the new trajectory for the European integration** set out by the annual Framework Activity Plan. In implementing this priority, the ambition of FEPS was also to explore new avenues for EU integration, tangent to the core social policies that the EU is already debating and considering. For this reason, a priority has been given to the issue of health policy, around which new paths for political

coordination and integration seem to emerge but still with much less enthusiasm and depth than the Covid crisis would have suggested.

To respond instead to the priority on **Shaping the transformations and ensuring social progress for all**, the thematic area of Social Europe has maintained a strong focus on the recovery and the need to design it in an inclusive way, by protecting and promoting fair jobs for all. To ensure social progress, the social angle of EU policymaking shall be assessed and reinforced in different policy areas, for instance in economic, climate, energy and digital policy. For this reason, the thematic block on Social Europe must be designed in close relation with other sections of FEPS work, in order to mainstream social outcomes and design socially just paths towards meaningful and rapid transitions.

### Results

Throughout the year, FEPS published insightful studies and policy briefs addressing critical issues on EU social policy. To single out the most prominent works, FEPS has started a stream of activities around the issue of mental health and the creation of a **European Health Union**, which represents a novelty for the foundation and a new priority for EU integration. One key publication explored the necessity of an EU-wide approach to the **mental health crisis**, advocating for integrated strategies to enhance mental well-being across member states. This study highlighted the disparities in mental health services and called for more cohesive, EU-driven solutions.

The other relevant achievements have been connected to **employment** policies in their different subthemes. As explained in the climate thematic block, great results have been attained in the 'social' assessment of the Fit-for-55 as well as in outlining the employment and territorial aspects of the just transition. Within the digital portfolio and the migration portfolio, employment has also been a leitmotif, creating synergies within FEPS programmatic work and internal organising. Ultimately, the work on employment carried out as part of the FEPS project *Recovery Watch* needs to be mentioned, which, although formally included in the Progressive Economy thematic area, has been employed to uncover how the national recovery plans have addressed activation policies, how they have

reformed employment offices and how they have designed the just digital transition for workers.

Moreover, FEPS's work in social policy reform emphasised the need for robust social safety nets and measures to reduce inequality. By aligning their initiatives with the European Pillar of Social Rights, they reinforced their commitment to creating a more inclusive and just society. Their comprehensive approach linked employment strategies with broader social policy objectives, ensuring a holistic impact on European citizens' lives.

Simultaneously, FEPS hosted numerous events and training sessions, fostering dialogue and collaboration among policymakers, experts, and civil society. These gatherings, such as the expert meeting on the **job guarantee** and the training on **work-life balance**, were instrumental in addressing the evolving challenges in the labour market and promoting fair wages and sustainable employment.

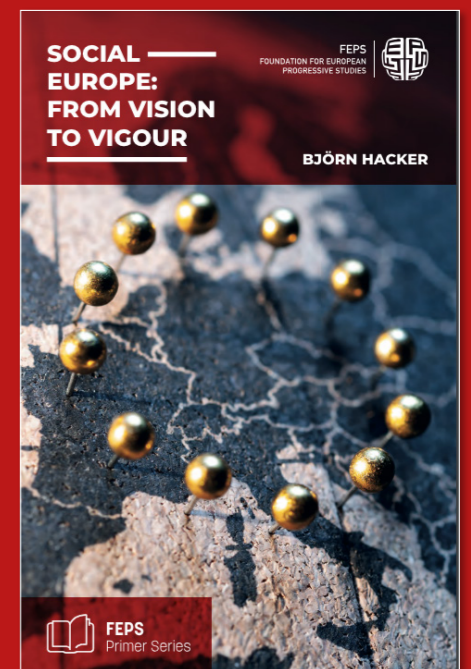
Through these interconnected activities, FEPS has not only advanced the discourse on social Europe but also actively contributed to shaping policies that enhance social cohesion and resilience across the EU. Its 2023 initiatives reflect a dedicated effort to promote health, well-being, and economic stability, embodying the core values of a progressive and unified Europe.



## HIGHLIGHT 1 // SOCIAL EUROPE: FROM VISION TO VIGOUR

### PRIMER

This FEPS Primer presents the competencies, scope and achievements of our Union in the social policy sphere. Professor Bjorn Hacker examines the tools the tools, the key players and the process behind a social Europe. It is a complex policy field, which encompasses employment, education, health, and long-term care policies. This book offers support to readers who wish to understand the policy dynamics of the EU in this crucial field and locate the steps of social policy coordination on the landscape of broader EU politics. The FEPS Primer series is meant with an educational purpose, to help new audiences enter specific thematic fields from a European perspective.





## HIGHLIGHT 2 // CHAMPIONS OF PROGRESS: PROGRESSIVES GO THE EXTRA MILE FOR SOCIAL EUROPE!

### EVENT

On the occasion of the PES Congress in Málaga, FEPS and the PES Group in the European Committee of the Regions organised an interactive discussion to frame challenges related to social rights and the question of how to ensure that the topic remains high on the EU's political agenda. Building on the work of progressive commissioners and **EU Council presidencies of Spain and Belgium** to further fortify Social Europe, we asked if we will witness an expansion of Social Europe or the disappearance

of the European Pillar of Social Rights and other policies. Indeed, Socialists and Social Democrats strive to create inclusive labour markets where everyone enjoys fair opportunities and conditions. Following keynotes from Commissioner Nicolas Schmit, local politicians engaged in round-robin exchanges about equality, jobs and inclusion, and how these depend on each other. We concluded with a high-level talk with national politicians on their social vision for the next mandate.



## HIGHLIGHT 3 // JOB GUARANTEE AND SURVEY ON PERCEPTIONS OF PUBLIC-LED PROGRAMMES

### SURVEY AND POLICY BRIEF

Following the exercises of canvassing and **surveying** in 2023 to explore citizens' preferences towards employment programs, FEPS and local civil society organisations delved into the potential of developing such initiatives at the EU level. Via an online survey we asked: What is needed now at the local, national and EU levels to achieve job stability for decent conditions? Which kind of jobs are needed to improve local economies and support communities and beyond? The consortium analysed and discussed national tendencies throughout the year and finally presented the results of the *European perceptions of public programmes for zero unemployment* policy brief, including several infographics. While we focused on the EU's capabilities to act as a multiplier, local developments in EU countries have already taken place and provide good practices and learnings to be further expanded.



## HIGHLIGHT 4 // A EUROPEAN HEALTH UNION - A BLUEPRINT FOR GENERATIONS

### BOOK

Covid-19 had undermined the notion that the European Union has very little to do with health and contributed to the European Commission's pledge in 2020 to build a **European Health Union**. Since then, Europeans have strengthened their call on the European Union to prioritise public health and to have a common EU health policy to ensure equitable access to healthcare, improve the quality of care provided and address social determinants of health. One way to ensure this and frame the work conducted by the Socialists in Europe is by developing and advocating for the Health Union concept, building on the One Health initiative. **FEPS' book *A European Health Union - A blueprint for generations?*** delves into the connections with other European policies, explores the potential institutional and treaty changes and discerns the most urgent steps towards an inclusive and social EHU. Throughout 2023, we explored the economic benefits of European collaboration and clear political commitment via expert exchanges.

### A European Health Union A Blueprint for Generations



Edited by:  
Vytenis Povilas Andriukaitis  
and Gediminas Cerniauskas

## HIGHLIGHT 5 // IS AN EU-WIDE APPROACH TO THE MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS NECESSARY?

### POLICY STUDY

Additionally, **mental health** became a prominent issue on the agenda, with a strong call to destigmatise the topic, improve care and address the shortage of staff. Our research explores the need for an EU mental health strategy. Through the policy study and dedicated policy brief series *Is an EU-wide approach to the mental health crisis necessary?*, authors examine mental health systems in France, Ireland and Poland, the scale of mental health issues that have arisen during the pandemic and the extent to which marginalised and at-risk groups receive targeted support. In the context of these findings, the series considers the need for an EU-wide strategy for mental health systems to meet these challenges and build resilience in EU communities, including protecting workers' rights and addressing the cross-border migration of healthcare professionals.





# FEPS AT WORK: RESEARCH AND STUDIES

## MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

# GENDER EQUALITY



### Ambition

This year, we have again seen a strong commitment and advancement of women's rights from the European Progressive sides, but this continues to be challenged by ever-growing conservative sentiments in Europe. Today's context is shaped by the backlash of anti-gender movements and the rise of political groups with right-wing and extreme-right populist affinities, affecting the legitimacy of the EP altogether. As a result, gender equality is now a highly contested policy field, and it matters to understand the reasons for the contestations and develop better strategies to tackle the backlash. **All policy is gendered**; in a society structured around hierarchical

gender relations, policies will always have an unequal gendered impact. Ignoring this reinforces existing inequalities. It is essential to maintain the intersectionality of gender with policies, to continue to fight for gender budgeting and to delineate the precise contours of a shared vision of feminist policy for progressive policymakers. This can apply to foreign policy or trade, as well as national legal framework, pertaining, for instance, to health, especially via access to safe and legal abortion. To overcome the persisting barriers, the EU must include a comprehensive review of its capacity, culture, and actions to cope with gender mainstreaming mechanisms.



### Results

The EU plays a crucial responsibility in initiating transformative policies towards changing social and gender norms and incentivising public investment in care. By taking leadership in this under-explored policy area, the EU may take a more proactive approach to rebalance persisting inequalities attributable to the neglect of care. One year following the launch of the EU Commission's **'European Care Strategy'**, FEPS continued its work on the care sector's challenges via a thorough analysis of the European initiative. The latter particularly focuses on childcare and long-term care (LTC) through two Council Recommendations on revising the Barcelona targets on early childhood education and care (ECEC) and access to affordable high-quality long-term care. The true question lies, however, in how this recognition translates into wide-reaching answers addressing the challenges faced by women whose individual situations are as diverse as Europe itself.

Indeed, this reality can also be understood by looking at the diverse national legal regimes regulating abortion. **Decriminalising abortion** is once again becoming an issue for supporters of the right to abortion in the face of various setbacks driven by its opponents since the early 2000s. A woman's access to abortion will depend not just on the existing legal framework but also on a range of additional barriers along her journey. In our research, we map all the (non-)legal criteria for profiling the different abortion regimes in the EU.

Analysing discourses shows the forms of resistance and stresses the counterstrategies needed to advance gender equality objectives. Eventually, the pursuit of gender equality objectives in the EP and its political groups requires coordinated efforts, which include decision-making strategies and a review of their internal

measures. Our policy study reviews gender equality policies in the EP via three recent cases. They include the EU's ratification of the Istanbul Convention, abortion rights in the EU and sexual harassment in the EP. Taken together, they showcase the necessity to prioritise the field in decision-making and the importance of remaining attentive to both everyday practices in parliament and political dynamics within and between political groups in relation to gender equality issues.

Additionally, at a global scale, the European Union still needs a more ambitious approach to substantially transforming the concept and practice of its foreign policy. Offering a strong intersectional lens to rethink existing power structures in global politics and societies enables deep processes of self-reflection and rethinking external policies. Considering the nascent place of feminist foreign policy approaches globally, the Feminist Foreign Policy Progressive Voices Collective (FFPPVC) endeavours to explore the transformative potentials of and identify existing challenges for a 'European feminist policy' for progressive stakeholders. To shift away from seeing gender equality as a mere 'add on', this project applies a feminist lens to this policy field traditionally claimed as gender-neutral and technocratic.

Finally, integrating **gender mainstreaming** into all policy sectors and at all levels of policymaking will contribute to the achievement of the EU's SDG targets, the implementation of the UNFCCC commitments and its Gender Action Plan, and the Gender Equality Strategy. Like with climate policy, the synergies with other policies should be fully explored to achieve the greatest co-benefits. Together, they will contribute to the systemic transformative change, which is essential to both gender and climate justice.





## HIGHLIGHT 1 // FFPP VOICES: A COLLECTIVE TO PROMOTE A FEMINIST AND PROGRESSIVE APPROACH TO FOREIGN POLICY

### PROJECT

As part of **Feminist Foreign Policy Progressive Voices Collective (FFPPVC)**, led by FEPS and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, we kicked off our activities on 23 and 24 October 2023 with the **high-level conference *Walking the Talk: Feminist Foreign Policy in Action*** in Brussels. We questioned traditional approaches to foreign policy to enable an alternative account of foreign relations from the standpoint of the most disadvantaged. With particular attention to gender and intersectional considerations, the collective will discuss international politics through a feminist lens and help to gear the ideas and policy recommendations emerging from this project. The project aims to advance concrete policy recommendations and will build on a multistakeholder feminist foreign policy community, which will gather feminist policy experts.



FEMINIST  
FOREIGN  
POLICY  
PROGRESSIVE  
VOICES

## HIGHLIGHT 2 // AUTOMATING INEQUALITY - THE DIGITAL ERA, A NEW REALITY PERPETUATING OLD FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION?

### EVENT

Parallel event during the 67th session of the United Nations - Commission on the Status of Women, New York, March 2023

Ensuring equality is an objective heavily impacted by the increasing digitalisation of our everyday lives. This new normal also poses a series of new challenges, in particular to disadvantaged groups.

FEPS, *Fondation Jean-Jaurès*, PES Women, and *UN Women Germany* came together for a parallel event during the 67th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67) session. We aimed to tackle critical political issues and advocate for a more inclusive, socially empowering, and fair approach to the ongoing digital transition. We sought to shed light on the emerging gender and intersectional inequalities in the digital age, particularly

addressing the knowledge gaps between the labour market, artificial intelligence, platform work, and equality. Our aim was also to confront the resilience of existing non-discrimination and equality frameworks in the face of the specific challenges posed by current trends in digitalisation.



# POLICY CONTRIBUTIONS



European Care strategy:  
A chance to ensure inclusive care for all?

### POLICY STUDY

In this policy study, published in collaboration with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, twelve authors seek to feed and guide the discussion by critically assessing whether the European Care Strategy can be seized as an opportunity to trigger a new approach to care that is truly inclusive and fair for all. In other words, this publication explores whether the EU is sufficiently equipping itself to live up to the claims that European values 'can only flourish in a caring society'. On the one hand, it offers an analysis of the positive developments witnessed by the key stakeholders. On the other, it also serves better to understand the remaining blind spots of the strategy. Care is such a complex and multifaceted policy field, each chapter dives into a different dimension relevant to understanding how the strategy can give itself the means to ensure that caregivers and -receivers do not fall short of the EU's fundamental values and the fulfilment of social rights. The recommendations were also discussed via a series of four lunch webinars focusing on long-term care, childcare, the digitalisation of the sector and its potential to enable sustainable growth.



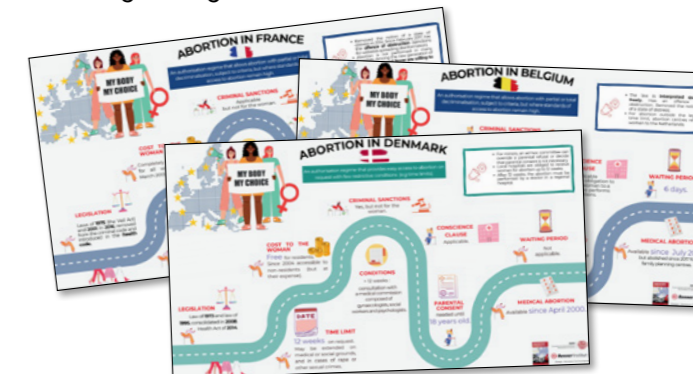
This work is part of the **#Care4Care project**



Abortion in the European Union  
Actors, issues and discourse

### BOOK AND COUNTRY FACTSHEETS

Access to abortion varies greatly across the EU. It is subject to various cumulative legal conditions and de facto barriers. The book *Abortion in the EU: Actors, Issues and Discourse* authored by Bérengère Marques Pereira, published by FEPS and the Karl-Renner-Institut illustrates that no country, even the most permissive ones, recognises women's control over their bodies in the way that feminist movements have been demanding since the 1970s. **This book compares the legal regime of abortion in the different EU countries** and the effectiveness of the right of access to abortion and provides a comparative look at the discourses and practices of abortion rights across Europe. It is true that in the EU, abortion is generally possible at the request of the woman, with a few exceptions. In addition to the book, our **country factsheets** provide a glimpse into the legal regimes and their implementation, highlighting that the cumulative nature of the legal conditions constitutes an obstacle to women's decision-making autonomy, as do practices of circumventing or even transgressing the law in certain states.





# FEPS AT WORK: RESEARCH AND STUDIES

## MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS MIGRATION



### Ambition

2023 has been a crucial year for migration from the point of view of the European Union. After years of stagnation, political unwillingness and member states' resistance, the European institutions have finally given a boost to the long-due reform of the EU asylum and migration policies. Frenzied and difficult negotiations between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission have finally shaped the content of the New Pact on migration and asylum, initially presented by the Commission in September 2020, on which a final political agreement was reached in December 2023 under the Spanish Presidency of the European Union.

While it is still to be seen how the Pact will be implemented on the ground, whether the measure provided to ensure solidarity among member states will function, and doubts about its capability to uphold human rights standards remain, the agreement was considered a political success for the Union, which eventually managed to overcome

the stalemate and introduce a comprehensive legislative framework before the end of the current legislature.

If political steps forward in the fields of migration have been made, the situation remains dire for migrants. In fact, the approach to migration of the Union and the majority of the member states continues to be characterised by a focus on closure, security and externalisation, that is, the tendency to entrust third states (countries of origin and transit) with the control of migration flows.

Against this background, FEPS's ambition in 2023 was to focus on relations with countries of origin and transit, understand their perspective on migration and the dynamics that regulate migration between Africa and Europe, and identify alternative migration schemes, in order to formulate policy recommendations for European decision-makers, also with the 2024 European elections in mind.



### Results

The above-mentioned FEPS's ambitions have been translated above all in the re-launch of the FEPS Global Migration Group, which was renamed Progressive Migration Group. The Group, under the chairmanship of Anna Terron, brought together an equal number of African and European experts on migration, with the goal of discussing, on an equal basis, migration issues. The premise of the work was the idea that migration is a phenomenon that can be managed only through fair and equal cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination, keeping into consideration the needs, interests and perspectives of all parties involved.

As migration will remain a contentious topic at the national as well as EU level and will be probably instrumentalised during the European election campaign, another line of work of FEPS centred on debunking false rhetoric about migration and on formulating recommendations for national and European decision-makers on how to communicate about migration. The results of the above-mentioned work have been two series of policy brief: five country case policy briefs and three communication policy briefs, focusing on practical suggestions on how to tackle migration in the policy discourse.





## HIGHLIGHT 1 // PROGRESSIVE MIGRATION GROUP

### PROJECT

The Progressive Migration Group (PMG) is a network of migration experts established by FEPS with the cooperation of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung EU Office and the support of the FES Flight and Migration Competence Center, based in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia). It is composed by an equal number of African and European members that, under the chairmanship of Anna Terron, former Secretary of State for migration of Spain, meet two to three times a year to discuss different aspects of migration, formulate progressive recommendations for European and African decision-makers and devise alternative migration narratives and scheme to the ones that currently dominate European politics and discourse.



In the course of 2023, the PMG met three times. Once in Barcelona (8-9 June) where discussion revolved around labour migration, development cooperation and the New Pact on Migration and Asylum. The second meeting took place in Addis Ababa, where the coherence of European policies towards migration, the externalisation of migration management and remittances were at the centre of the debate. A final meeting between the PMG representatives and MEPs took place in the European Parliament on 8 November. In 2023, the Group produced four policy briefs (a fifth one was published in 2024).

## HIGHLIGHT 2 // TOWARDS A HUMANE REFUGEE POLICY FOR THE EU

### BOOK

A pragmatic and humane response to the challenges posed by the refugee protection crisis can be found in municipalities and their active civil society. Gesine Schwan outlines a detailed proposal on how to engage municipalities and civil society initiatives in the relocation and reception of migrants and asylum seekers.

The proposal will not be a panacea for the complex EU migration and refugee policy. Yet, the tools illustrated in this book could benefit the hosting communities as much as the newcomers.



# POLICY CONTRIBUTIONS



### Communicating on migration

#### POLICY BRIEF SERIES

In Europe, media, policy and public debates about migration are highly polarised and harmful, leading to increasingly restrictive migration and asylum policies. Against this background, engaging in discussion on this topic is very risky for European policymakers because their arguments, if not correctly handled, could – and often do – backfire. Through the three policy briefs on Communicating on migration – authored by Rob McNeil – FEPS and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung aimed to provide concrete suggestions to lower the volume of the debate, reduce polarisation and improve the terminology. The three policy briefs focused respectively on choosing the battle, communicating carefully and honestly, and communicating clearly.



### The political economy of migration policies

#### POLICY BRIEF SERIES

We must debunk anti-immigration ‘myths’ across the EU to understand whether and how migration can represent an opportunity for sustainable social and economic development.

FEPS, in cooperation with the *Centres for European Policy Network*, *Fondation Jean-Jaurès*, *Università per Stranieri di Perugia* and *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Italy*, aimed to assess the phenomenon from both a political and an economic angle, using four countries as case studies: France, Germany, Italy and Poland.



# FEPS AT WORK: RESEARCH AND STUDIES

## MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

# EUROPE IN THE WORLD



### Ambition

FEPS continued to play a pivotal role in fostering progressive responses to deepening existential challenges stemming from Russia's ongoing full-scale war on Ukraine and the emerging international security threats. Against the background of escalating societal polarisation, growing insecurity and militarisation, FEPS strived to spearhead initiatives that navigate global tensions through renewed multilateral response based on socially responsible partnerships. We advocated for the EU to assert itself as a robust geopolitical actor while remaining steadfast in its founding principles and values. This entails advancing policy priorities within a broader strategic framework, ensuring that EU enlargement and treaty reforms converge to deepen

and widen the Union effectively. Furthermore, FEPS focused on promoting geopolitical unity, emphasising the coordination of external policies, including defence, and facilitating rapid integration into key sectors such as energy, transportation, and digital infrastructure. Our ambition is to foster an inclusive approach that harmonises the pursuit of security with other critical objectives for Europe's future, such as the green transition, governance reform, technological innovation, and investment in public services. Therefore, ultimately, FEPS promoted an open, inclusive discourse that aligns with progressive values and fosters actions to advance political, defence, economic, social, technological, and ecological priorities.



### Results

Against the backdrop of developments with significant transnational ramifications, FEPS has been actively engaged in delivering publications, organising public events, and facilitating exchanges focused on two overlapping axes:

- The internal reform of the EU and the implications of these developments on the EU itself and its international presence. Through in-depth analysis and policy recommendations, FEPS has sought to address pressing issues such as governance reform, institutional strengthening, and the enlargement process. By fostering dialogue and providing insights into these internal dynamics, we aim to contribute to the EU's resilience and effectiveness in tackling challenges both within and beyond its borders.
- EU as a global power in the changing international arena. Considering the evolving geopolitical landscape and the EU's aspirations to assert itself as a global actor, we have convened discussions and produced analysis on topics ranging from foreign policy coordination to strategic partnerships with other global actors. Our goal is to shape a progressive vision for the EU's engagement on the world stage, one that promotes peace, stability, and cooperation while upholding the values of democracy and human rights.

In the context of Russian aggression against Ukraine, through the launch of analytical series Progressive Ukraine and a number of high-level expert discussions in European capitals (Brussels, Budapest, London, Helsinki and Vienna) around the book *Europe and the war in Ukraine*, we continued to foster a medium- to long-term socio-democratic vision for Ukraine's rebuild, touching upon Europe's roles and responsibilities, as well as on how to link the recovery process with Ukraine's accession to the EU.

In the framework of the project *12 years of crisis in the Sahel* together with The Fondation Jean-Jaurès and Istituto Affari Internazionali and during the annual Africa Day, FEPS continued to pursue a transformative shift in the European approach to foreign, development, aid and security policies in Africa to promote a more coherent, cohesive and lasting partnership between the two shores.

Africa Day has been a staple in bringing Africa to the Netherlands for 25 years. Drawing around 500 attendees, including speakers, volunteers, and

representatives from 40 partner organisations, it stands as the largest public event on Africa and international cooperation in the Netherlands. Featuring workshops, lectures, discussions, films, and music, the day serves as a platform for African voices and sparks dialogues among citizens, policymakers, and NGOs on fostering equitable cooperation between Africa and Europe. Organised by FEPS and the *Foundation Max van der Stoep* (FMS), this year's theme, 'Climate Justice', spotlighted the disproportionate impact of climate change on the African continent despite its lesser contribution to the crisis.

At our headquarters in Brussels, on 17 July 2023, together with Plataforma CIPÓ, we hosted progressive Brazilian parliamentarians and members of the European Parliament in order to debate and identify opportunities to advance cooperation, based on mutual interests, with an emphasis upon the areas of climate, technological and energy transition, sustainable development and green industrialisation.

On 15 November, FEPS and the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF) brought together leading European and US experts and policymakers for the 6 annual State of the Unions conference to engage in a critical reflection on what we can expect from the US presidential race in the coming year and the impact the elections may have on the transatlantic partnership and the collective security across the Atlantic.

Following the successful flagship research series on strategic autonomy, FEPS remained committed to strategic foresight as an indispensable element of European policymaking. In Vienna, on 20 November, partnering with Karl Renner Institute, we presented and discussed our book *Forging Europe's Leadership* which provides a timely reflection by experts in their respective fields, seeking to understand and shape the path ahead at a critical juncture for European integration.

FEPS partnered with S&D to go through the major issues and challenges that the EU faces in its international trade policy at a moment when multilateral order has been put under a serious strain. In a joint 2023 policy study, we have observed that while the challenges are many, they can also become a source of opportunity. For instance, trade can be a potent instrument for promoting the green transition both at home and globally. Yet, given the unequal capacity of countries to contribute to such policies, the trade-green nexus should be complemented with a development agenda.



## HIGHLIGHT 1 // FORGING EUROPE'S LEADERSHIP - GLOBAL TRENDS, RUSSIAN AGGRESSION AND THE RISK OF A REGRESSIVE WORLD

### BOOK

On 24 February 2022, a large-scale war has returned to Europe. Russia's full-scale war of Ukraine has eclipsed long-held assumptions about stability and security in Europe. More importantly, following the global pandemic, it underscored that a reactionary EU, which attempts to 'muddle through' one crisis after another, will not be able to stand at the forefront of a positive (global) change. The fog of war might cloud prospects for the outcome on the battlefield, but it remains clear that the implications of Russia's aggression will unfold over many years and affect various aspects of the European and international order. While we can't predict the future, it is imperative that we anticipate and prepare for the (un) certain. This book provides a timely and essential read for those seeking to understand and shape the path ahead at a critical juncture for European integration. It is an "intellectual project of great value" (Enrico Letta) carried out by renowned experts in their fields, it represents "a unique tool for thinking about how Europe can deploy its leadership in the face of mounting geopolitical headwinds" (Arancha González Laya), preventing the scenario of a regressive world from unfolding.



## HIGHLIGHT 3 // STRATEGIC AUTONOMY—PATHWAYS TO PROGRESSIVE ACTION

### PROJECT

FEPS, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and Fondation Jean-Jaurès launched "Strategic Autonomy—pathways to progressive action", a flagship research project investigating the concept of 'European strategic autonomy' (ESA). Despite the concept getting more central in EU affairs circles every day, there is a persistent **lack of clarity** on what European strategic autonomy actually means. For this reason – and with the debate over ESA's definition, content and implications in full swing – it's time for progressive thinkers to provide an **in-depth analysis of the concept and set an agenda** on where to direct and how to operationalise the term.

High-level policy experts have provided actionable recommendations through a series of publications and roundtables around three areas:

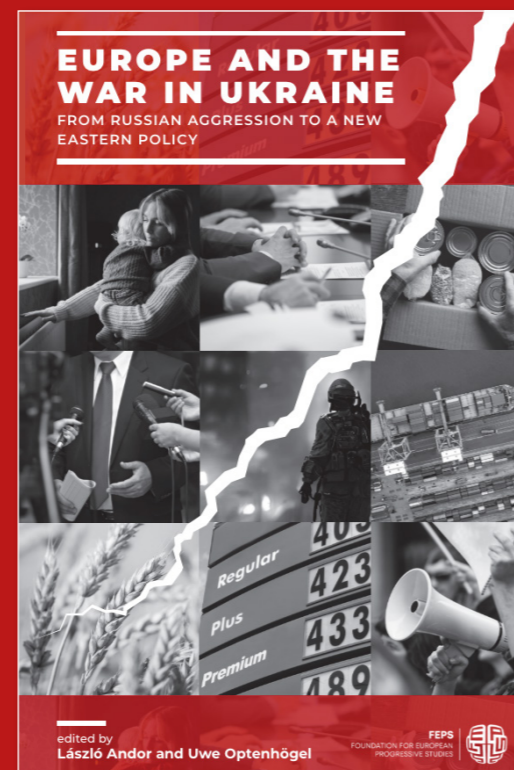
- Security and Defence
- Economics and Trade
- Digital and Technology



## HIGHLIGHT 2 // EUROPE AND THE WAR IN UKRAINE - FROM RUSSIAN AGGRESSION TO A NEW EASTERN POLICY

### BOOK

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has sent shockwaves across the globe, putting to an unprecedented test the peace and security architecture constructed after World War II. While not a military power itself, the EU appeared as a significant actor aiding Ukraine's resistance against an unprovoked aggression. The book 'Europe and the war in Ukraine', written by 23 outstanding experts and edited by László Andor and Uwe Optenhögel, is an indispensable source of analysis and information for students, researchers and policymakers trying to understand the diverse global consequences of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Together with *Karl-Renner-Institut*, *Kalevi Sorsa-säätiö*, *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung*, *Fondation Max van der Stoep*, *Fondation Jean-Jaurès* and *Fundacja Amicus Europae*, FEPS' ambition with this book is to track through a progressive lens the developments concerning the key aspects of the war from a European perspective.



## HIGHLIGHT 4 // BRAZIL-EU PARLIAMENTARIANS' EXCHANGE

### POLICY BRIEF AND EVENT

The EU-Brazil partnership holds immense significance for progressives due to its potential for advancing collaborative efforts which can bolster initiatives aimed at addressing pressing global challenges such as climate change and social inequality. By leveraging their respective strengths and resources, the EU and Brazil can work together to promote inclusive policies, foster sustainable development and advocate for democratic principles on a global scale. Brazil has been elected as the host country for COP30, in addition to their position of Presidency of the G20. This is an opportune moment to discuss how to strengthen strategic

relations between Brazil and Europe and understand how the two sides can work better together to advance the challenge of building a common progressive and democratic vision. The event, which brought together progressive Brazilian parliamentarians and members of the European Parliament, allowed them to debate and identify opportunities to advance cooperation. It also marked the launch of our policy brief *Lula's new government, prospects for Brazilian foreign policy and relations with the EU*, produced in collaboration with *Plataforma CIPÓ*, on perspectives for cooperation between Brazil and Europe and laid the foundation for a FEPS mission to the country in 2024.





# FEPS AT WORK: RESEARCH AND STUDIES

## MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

# POLITICAL EUROPE



### Ambition



The year ahead of the European elections is traditionally the time when the attention to the issues related to European integration grows and there is a certain pressure to advance on key dossiers. But anticipating the 12 months ahead, the FEPS Framework Activity Programme (FAP) pointed to the existential questions that would need to be answered to consolidate the idea of what kind of ideals and what kind of project the EU should become to be fit to face the entire set of profound challenges. Some among them related to ongoing processes (such as demographic developments, digitalisation and climate change), the others emerged on the respective waves of disruptions amounting to the polycrisis (including the Covid-19 pandemic and a war at the EU's doorstep, after the brutal Russian invasion on Ukraine).

Certainly, the more analysts looked back, the more they considered the expiring legislative period as turbulent. To some extent, there were moments when the old

mechanics of 'from crisis to progress in integration' worked. The EU was able to mobilise and unite member states in the face of needs behind such ambitious agendas as the Next Generation EU or the mechanism of SURE. But some member states considered these temporary solutions and were raising their voices reflecting traditional divisions – between the West and East, between North and South, between the eurozone and the non-euro members, between net-payers and net-contributors, and many others. FEPS, in its FAP, was pointing to those dual integrational and centrifugal tendencies, seeing its role as a space to connect diverse debates and enable friendly confrontation of the progressives holding opposite views.

Consequently, the FEPS FAP has underlined that the existing divergence may hinder the EU's attempts to enlarge and deepen. In that sense, a reform of the EU is due, but it could not be defined with the old criteria or old frameworks used to assess the EU's viability.

There was a clear need to seek transition towards new model(s), but also to make sure that the ambition to achieve it does not fall victim to right-wing radicals and extremists (who had been rising in power and entering EU governments). In the past, those in favour of treaty reforms to pursue further federalisation stood against those not ready to let any new compromise emerge. In 2023, however, the situation was different. With the governments in Warsaw and Budapest there was a new approach in favour of the treaty reform – but one aiming for a setback.

The latter point was also connected to the question of the EU's capacity to react and act when its fundamental values are undermined, and the rules are disobeyed. The long-term struggle to enact Article 7

in these cases illustrated how hard it is to consolidate behind sanctions against one EU member. Therefore, the conditionality mechanism, allowing to withholding Next Generation EU-funds from those member states who are violating the principles of democracy and the rule of law, certainly is a progress. The query remained, however, on how to proceed in such cases in the future.

Finally, the FAP still echoed the memory of the Conference on the Future of Europe and the demands that were formulated on the wave of this mobilisation of the citizens. This is also why the mission to conceptualise the premises for making the EU more democratic was placed at the core of what FEPS worked on in 2023.

### Results

What made the work plan 2023 different was the re-allocation of the topics connected with enlargement and specifically with Western Balkans into the thematic field of Political Europe. This was symbolic, showcasing that all the efforts geared up by FEPS and Partners (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Dialogue Southeast Europe, Renner Institut, Masarykova demokratická akademie, Kalevi Sorsa Foundation, Fondation Jean-Jaurès, Fondation Max van der Stoep, Društvo Progresiva, Olof Palme International Center and CeSPI), when it comes to Friends of Western Balkans, Balkan Focus and others are puzzle pieces of which the future EU should be built. This was particularly underlined during a session in Thessaloniki, which commemorated begin of the Thessaloniki process 20 years ago, and drew attention to the fact that when saying 'the EU must both deepen and enlarge' one has to be most prudent neither to make applicant countries hostage to the EU slow reform, nor let go of any fundamental criteria such as Copenhagen ones. Over the year, there was more convergence between FEPS and partners, leading to the conclusion that together they should head towards a coherent annual programme in the future.

Then, because the emphasis remained on the EU and its (new) neighbourhood, FEPS continued its work regarding the future of the EU-UK relationship, possibly the only political think tank in Brussels committed this cause. The actions included the FEPS-Fabian Society New Year's Conference Pathway to power (gathering almost 1000 participants and opened by Rachel Reeves, shadow chancellor, to which FEPS brought a large delegation of 16 speakers, including the highest-ranking members of the EU-UK Parliamentary Partnership Assembly – two Vice Presidents of the EP – Katarina Barley and Pedro Silva Pereira).

Later, FEPS, together with FES London and Fabian Society organised a fringe breakfast on the future of the EU-UK relationship and the plans of Labour, featuring shadow foreign secretary David Lammy and shadow minister for Northern Ireland, Hilary Ben, as well as several MPs and members of the House of Lords, alongside a delegation of party leaders (including Ivana Bacik, leader of the Irish Labour Party), MEPs, MPs, international secretaries and others. Finally, FEPS, together with TASC and FES London concluded a research project regarding the situation in Northern Ireland post-Brexit, with two reports and an event hosted by the SDLP leadership in Belfast.

With the FAP 2023 motto: 'transform, consolidate and look ahead', FEPS devoted much attention to the question of the objectives and mechanics of the institutional reform (see Case 1), and expansion of the transnational democracy (see Case 2).



## HIGHLIGHT 1 // EU TREATIES – WHY THEY NEED TARGETED CHANGES

### POLICY STUDY AND EVENT

The EU project is confronted with a radically new context: war on our continent, geopolitical rivalry, the climate emergency, a cost-of-living crisis, the pandemic experience, tensions about migration and misinformation disturbing democracies. The need for a stronger European capacity to act is evident on all these fronts, and the current EU treaties show their limits. To find answers to this challenging situation, FEPS President Maria João Rodrigues launched this project to reassess the EU treaties and to identify targeted changes. A group of renowned

European experts published their results after two years of systematic work. Their policy study identifies the policy fields requiring an extension of the qualified majority voting and the co-decision with the European Parliament; as well as the policy fields requiring an upgrade of EU competencies, such as health or industrial policies, energy and food security, regarding the global negotiations about the climate emergency and AI governance. The policy study was presented in a symposium jointly organised with the S&D Group in the European Parliament.



## HIGHLIGHT 2 // LIVING UP TO, NOT LEAVING ASIDE - THE PROGRESSIVE STRATEGY TOWARDS THE 2024 ELECTIONS

### EVENT

This project was launched by FEPS in cooperation with the FES Brussels to identify the avenues for improvement of deliberative and participatory democracy in the EU. The initiative was meant to look at five guiding questions (connected with the EU elections and potentially larger mandate for the europarties, the role of the top candidates and manifestoes, the potential for adopting the legislation on transnational lists and the significance of the campaign) and discuss them within the Future workshop format, involving sessions with the respectively diverse target groups. These would be summarised with a report, and followed up with research and instructive audio-visual materials (ready to support the MEPs of the new mandate). Consequently, FEPS organised four seminars with academics, youth representatives, civil society organisations (the first consultation of that type co-organised with the support of SOLIDAR) and with politicians. The latter took place as a fringe meeting at the PES Congress in Malaga (supported

by PSOE and Pablo Iglesias Foundation), opened by FEPS President, Maria João Rodrigues and seeing an all-women panel with Katarina Barley MEP, Lina Galvez MEP, Hana Jalloul MP, Gabi Bischoff MP, Sofie Amalie Stage YES and Ania Skrzypek FEPS. The further sessions were coordinated by Ania Skrzypek and Kido Koenig, Director of Foundation Max van der Stoel – who will work on the second and final phase of that project.



## HIGHLIGHT 3 // FRIENDS OF THE WESTERN BALKANS

### PROJECT

The Friends of the Western Balkans (FoWB) network was established in 2022 with the impulse of FEPS and in cooperation with the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung's Dialogue South-East Europe, Foundation Max van der Stoel, Olof Palme International Center, Fondation Jean-Jaurès, Karl-Renner-Institut, Kalevi Sorsa Foundation, Masarykova demokratická akademie and Progresiva. In June 2023, the FoWB met in Thessaloniki, where participants met on the 20th anniversary of the

Thessaloniki Declaration to discuss the unfolding geopolitical context, the recent elections in Montenegro, the potential of staged accession and how to make enlargement appealing to citizens. A second meeting took place in Sarajevo in November. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the discussion revolved around the question of autocracies' interferences in the WB6, the Franco-German Report on enlargement and the possibility of having a new round of enlargement in 2030.



## HIGHLIGHT 4 // VILLA VIGONI - WHAT IS PROGRESSIVE? CONFERENCE SERIES: THE EUROPEAN POLITICAL COMMUNITY FROM PRAGUE TO GRANADA - RAISING UP TO THE CHALLENGE OF GEOPOLITICS?

### POLICY BRIEF AND EVENT

In 2023, the yearly event *What is progressive?* – organised in cooperation with the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung's Italian Office, Fondation Jean-Jaurès, the German-Italian Centre for the European Dialogue Villa Vigoni and the Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale (CeSPI) – focused on the European Political Community, the new international 'platform' established after the suggestion of French President Emmanuel Macron, to respond to the geopolitical challenges posed by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and boost European coop-

eration beyond the EU borders. Participants discussed the purpose, structure and future of the EPC, its strategic role and its ties with the European Union. After the event, the policy brief *European Political Community: Informality as a key to success* by Dario D'Urso, Lada Vetrini and Sabina de Silva was published. The publication illustrated the primary outcome of the event and underlined how the informality of the format allowed European leaders to freely discuss open issues at the ministerial level without the pressure of political consensus.





# FEPS AT WORK: RESEARCH AND STUDIES

## MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

# DEFENDING AND DEEPENING DEMOCRACY



### Ambition

The European Union's focus on democracy experienced a decline in political momentum, marking a year of cautious consolidation rather than ambitious advancement. This shift came after the heightened commitment to democracy following Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, which initially bolstered the EU's democratic initiatives but saw a gradual decrease in urgency by 2023. Key areas of concern in 2023 included the handling of internal conflicts within the EU and geopolitical tensions impacting its near neighbours.

The EU faced significant challenges due to renewed conflicts in the Middle East and the South Caucasus, notably between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and between Israel and Hamas. These conflicts exposed and exacerbated the weaknesses in the EU's democracy support policies, hindering efforts to promote democratic reforms in the affected regions.

Within the EU, throughout the year, the European Commission maintained pressure on Hungary and Poland over democratic backsliding, notably withholding funding in 2022 and observing some positive results of this strategy in Poland following the electoral

victory of a pro-democracy coalition. However, the strategy was less effective with Hungary, where funds were eventually released to the still-autocratic regime by the end of the year.

New dangers of democratic backsliding are already looming, particularly in Slovakia, where the media and justice sector is under serious attack after SMER's electoral win in September 2023. Finally, the continued rise of far-right parties threatens to undermine the liberal-democratic fabric on which the societies of EU member states are built. It is particularly worrying that a far-right party joined a governing coalition in Finland after the elections in April 2023 and that a far-right party became the strongest force on the political scene in the Netherlands.

Efforts to defend and promote democracy also saw setbacks in broader initiatives. The EU's Defence of Democracy package faced objections and delays, reflecting the complex interplay between member-state politics and EU legislative processes. Despite these challenges, some progress was made, particularly in leveraging accession negotiations to drive reforms in Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia.

### Results

In 2023, FEPS' work on democracy focussed on three areas:

**(1) Defence of Democracy**

**(2) Deepening Democracy**

and the transversal priority of **(3) Young People and Democracy**.

Regarding the priority of youth, in the first half of the year, we were focused on disseminating the results of the Builders of Progress report, published in late 2022, which summarises two years of extensive research and more

than 18,000 responses, making it the most comprehensive survey on the political opinions of young Europeans. Presenting the results in 2023 to various Directorate-Generals of the European Commission and discussing the findings with Social Democratic stakeholders from Brussels and the member states in a dedicated webinar aimed to ensure the lasting impact of the report.

In the second half of the year, work focused on a project exploring the relationship between socio-economically disadvantaged young people and democracy.

The project emphasised developing concrete recommendations on how young people from these backgrounds can be better included in democratic political participation by local and national actors and EU institutions. In late 2023, this culminated in the first of several outputs, a launch event in Madrid focussing on the Spanish results of an FEPS policy study.

The second half of the year was also marked by the unfortunate cancellation of a high-level conference on EU-Israel relations that was to address the resilience of

democracy in Israel and the EU. The attacks on Israel, just one week before the start of the conference, left the organisers, including FEPS, with no other choice but to postpone it to 2024.

In the second half of 2023, the portfolio's efforts also focused heavily on researching whether centre-right parties in Europe are becoming radicalised and, if so, what impact this might have on democracy. The results of this significant collaborative research project are due in the spring of 2024.

## HIGHLIGHT 1 // YOUTH SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY IN SPAIN: DEMOCRACY IN THE FACE OF DISADVANTAGE

### POLICY STUDY AND EVENT

On 11 December, in Madrid, we unveiled the policy study Youth support for democracy in Spain: democracy in the face of disadvantage, produced by FEPS with the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and the Fundacion Felipe González, and authored by Kilian Wirthwein and Javier Carbonell Castañer. Part of the FEPS Builders of Progress series, the policy study focuses on young Europeans' aspirations.

Our research highlights several key findings about young people's political engagement. Despite a noticeable interest in politics, their participation remains low. They support democratic values but are critical of the current system. Socio-economic barriers significantly hinder their active political involvement, and political stigma and media mistrust further reduce their participation.

To address these issues, we propose integrating youth perspectives into government policies, enacting a youth law in Spain along with youth impact assessments, enhancing support for youth organisations, and implementing administrative reforms and economic policies to tackle housing and job market challenges faced by young people.

Despite many challenges, Spanish youth seek more democratic engagement. Effective policies can increase their participation.



## HIGHLIGHT 2 // JOINT CIVIL SOCIETY AND DEMOCRACY ORGANISATIONS' PRIORITIES FOR THE DEFENCE OF DEMOCRACY PACKAGE

### PAPER

As part of its work to impact policy on the European level, FEPS contributed to a paper published in March 2023 summarising the joint priorities of organisations based in Europe and active in democracy, human rights and the rule of law for the European Commission's Defence of Democracy Package.

The joint paper emphasised the need to carefully consider legislative and non-legislative initiatives, ensuring that they uphold international human

rights law, the Charter of Fundamental Values, article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union and European policy-making processes. The paper provides recommendations in various areas, including civil society, civic space, active citizenship, European elections, disinformation, the online public sphere, independent media and foreign interference. We believe effective action in these areas is crucial to protecting democracy ahead of the 2024 European Parliament elections and beyond.



# FEPS AT WORK: RESEARCH AND STUDIES

## MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS **NEXT LEFT**



### Ambition

In 2023, the theme 'Next Left' applied to two dimensions of the FEPS Framework Activity Programme (FAP): the 10th thematic field on one hand, and, on the other, to the leading research programme, which had been established with the Karl Renner Institut in 2009, chaired by Andreas Schieder, chair of the SPÖ delegation in the European Parliament. To that end, the Oxford Symposium (organised since 2012 at St. Catherine's College with the support of Karl Renner Institut and Progressive Britain) remained a flagship event.

Since 2023 was the last year before the the European elections, the guiding principles were to serve to identify an answer to the pertinent question: how to renew in the short term (politically and organisationally), claim ownership over key political issues and pave path (of return) towards power. This meant that the work conducted through research, debates, publications and training needed to feed into a better understanding of: the ideological dilemmas connected with the complex global context and progressing transformations; the root causes of fading electoral popularity and the potential synthesis that could bring diverse groups of voters back under the progressive roof; and, finally, the organisational and communication practices that would enable Social Democrats to open up, reach out and inspire. These somewhat general queries were not to be conducted as abstracts but tested in the context

of concrete governance-related issues. The goal was to provide a set of best practices that ensured a more lasting primacy of progressive ideas within the respective member states, and to showcase the politicisations of the European integration process and provide concrete examples of the cornerstones on which the distinctively progressive agenda for the future of Europe could be further built. Concerning the latter, an important preoccupation remained the internal tensions regarding some of the key issues and consequently, Next Left would also dive into the question of what unites and what potentially divides sister parties nationally and regionally.

This approach meant that an effort was made to strengthen the connection between the academic and political deliberations further; seek the opportunities through which the European level debates could be connected with the national level ones; and expand the toolbox – especially within the Next Left Research Programme. The latter saw new features, which included Next Left Lectures in the European Parliament (following the pilot project in 2022), publications featuring so-called country case studies, and connections established between the Focus Group Meetings and the sessions with the respective sister parties of the PES. Further thoughts had been given to the question of how to perpetually innovate, and that gave a solid base for the design of an even more ambitious programme for 2024.



### Results

Consequently, it was a very intense year, which saw a great degree of modernisation and improvements to raise the profile of FEPS (and partners) even further as a consortium responsible for the most instructive, most insightful and most inspiring deliberations on the future of progressivism. The record below is not exhaustive but is hopefully illustrative of the prominent achievements.

Concerning modernisation, the Next Left research programme saw a series of new publications (so-called 'Country case studies', of which the first four invited outstanding scholars elaborated on Social Democracy in Austria, Australia, Romania and France) and two very successful lectures held in the European Parliament – which were delivered respectively by Roger Liddle and Daphne Halikopoulou. The events were hosted by two members of the EP (Andreas Schieder and João Albuquerque) and involved several other MEPs in the role of first respondents, in additionally to having been attended by the senior staff members of all Brussels-based FEPS sister organisations at the spot and online by senior academics (members of the Next Left High-Level Conversation). The lectures were recorded, feeding into the FEPS OPU (Open Progressive University, within the module 'Next Left') and one of them resulted in a separate policy study (R. Liddle, *Prospects for a Keir Starmer Premiership*).

The 2023 FEPS Framework Activity Programme emphasised the need for the Next Left to also play a greater role when it comes to political consultancy. To recall, the Focus Group is a group composed of 15 academics and analysts, jointly working and peer-reviewing papers on the selected topics regarding future of Social Democracy. Hence, the three sessions of in-person meetings of the group were organised in three European Capitals: Lisbon, Warsaw and Brussels. The first two sessions featured three elements of the agenda: a set of closed-door meetings with the respective sister parties' leaderships, international secretariats and MPs; another internal

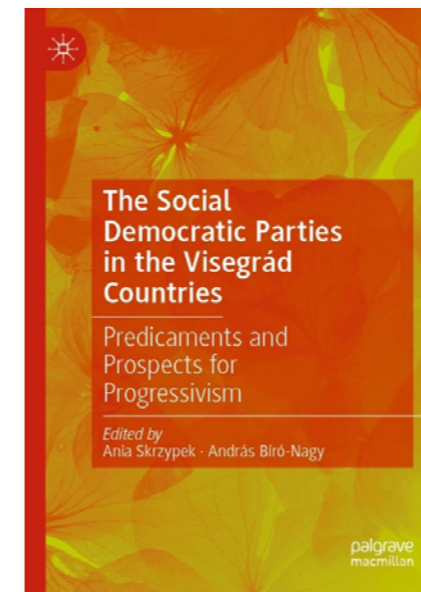
session devoted to the peer reviews among FG members the public events (at this occasion the Next Left volume 14 *Crisis and progressive politics: how to make hard choices and succeed?* was also launched at two conferences: one, with 600 participants, at the ISCTE together with PS Portugal and ResPublica Foundation, and the second, with 250 participants, at the Forum Postepu, together with Amicus Europae Foundation of President Kwasniewski). The final session in Brussels featured six further bilateral meetings with MEPs (B. Benifei, J. Albuquerque, A. Schieder, M. Belka, M. Nemeč and M. Ecke), who each provided a review of the papers (written throughout the year and to be included in vol. 15) and engaged with Dutch scholars in an exchange on the topics of their respective portfolios/interests.

What is more, the ambition to forge connections and share best practices led to another book, which was published by FEPS and the Fabian Society in the aftermath of the New Year Conference: *Leading the Way – Lessons for Labour from Europe*, featuring examples of distinctively progressive political initiatives across the diverse level of governance. Moreover, a set of seven reports (six country case studies and one comparative) were presented as outcome of the two-year-long survey and research on the *Covid-19 crisis: implications and lessons for the European social democracy*. They resulted from a project conducted together by FEPS and FES, with the support of Kieskompas in the second stage – and with all the interim, national round table types of debates reached out to a community of about 350 stakeholders (politicians, academics, trade unionists, civil society experts and representatives). Last but not least, since the FAP also emphasised the need to look at the electoral strategies and tough choices, this became a leading theme of the 2023 Progressive Governance Symposium – which was held in cooperation with Das Progressive Zentrum and FES took place in Stockholm, hosted there by SAP (especially by Magdalena Andersson and Mikael Damberg) towards the end of the year.





# POLICY CONTRIBUTIONS



## The Social Democratic parties in the Visegrád countries – Predicaments and prospects for Progressivism

### BOOK

This publication came out of a project conducted by FEPS together with Policy Solution in Hungary, with the support of Masarykova Democatická Akademie and Centrum im. Ignacego Daszyńskiego. The scholar's research question was 'the state and prospect of the Social Democratic parties in Central and Eastern Europe', a topic which, seen the challenging political situation in the region, was considered very timely and under-studied. Following a sequence of months devoted to the desk studies and to peer reviews, the outcomes represented important research and, consequently, following further adjustments under the leadership of two editors (Ania Skrzypek and András Bíró-Nagy) was published by Palgrave (FEPS' first ever title to be published by the venerable publishing house). The volume is composed by four country case studies, and a comparative chapter is recommended to the readership by the cover quotes of: Patrick Diamond, Biljana Borzan MEP and Aleksander Kwaśniewski, former president of Poland (1995 – 2005). The book is available in bookshops worldwide, has already received several positive reviews and is considered by many as an exceptional volume.

## Next Left country case studies

### BOOK SERIES

The publication series is an outcome of the work within the Next Left Research Programme by FEPS and Karl-Renner-Institut.

It explores the current state of Social Democracy in France, Austria, Romania and Australia. Through insightful analysis of domestic political contexts and the exploration of the often turbulent political history of Social Democratic parties, it enables a full immersion into specific political programmes and policies, while simultaneously providing a canvas for sharing the best practices for the Social Democratic movement to move forward on a global scale.

## HIGHLIGHT 1 // - THE NINTH OXFORD SYMPOSIUM - POTENTIAL, PROMISE AND POWER: HOW TO DELIVER PROGRESSIVE POLITICS IN TURBULENT TIMES?

### EVENT

Already for the ninth time, politicians, scholars and stakeholders (from think tanks and polling institutes, as well as from trade unions and civil society) met for a two-day high-level seminar to discuss the most pertinent ideas on the future of Social Democracy. The event, organised by FEPS, Karl Renner Institut and Progressive Britain, was opened by Annelise Dodds, chair of the Labour Party, together with Maria Maltschnig and Nathan Yeowell. Their interventions were followed by a lecture by Andrew Gamble on the concept of an Open left and later by sessions concerning the disempowering notion of poly-crisis, the changing definition of social progress and challenges in delivering welfare for all, the industrial strategy and tensions around the red-green agenda, as also the mission to boost democracy and halt the march of the radical right. The programme featured additionally a guest lecture by Arancha Gonzalez, Dean of Science Po's Paris School of International Affairs and former minister of Foreign Affairs in Spain (who devoted part of her presentation to the FEPS handbook on trade). The very intense conversations and the rich material from the event will be

turned into a volume, edited by Patrick Diamond and Ania Skrzypek and to be published to celebrate the following year's 10th jubilee edition.



## HIGHLIGHT 2 // NEXT LEFT LECTURES

### EVENTS

In 2023, FEPS and the Karl-Renner-Institut organised the second and third iterations of the Next Left Lecture series, which are the latest addition to the Next Left Research Programme under the leadership of Andreas Schieder, MEP S&D.

Lord Roger Liddle, a member of the House of Lords, presented the second lecture, titled 'Prospects for Labour victory in the UK: what a Keir Starmer government can achieve and what obstacles stand in its way?' the evolution of the UK Labour Party over the past few decades, addressing Brexit, its causes, and its impact on the British people. He then focused on Keir Starmer's leadership and his agenda for the upcoming election.

Professor Daphne Halikiopoulou, Chair in Comparative Politics at York University, delivered the third lecture, titled 'What to do about right-wing populism?'. She examined right-wing populist parties, highlighting their complexity and the diversity of their voter bases. Additionally, she outlined the key points around which progressives should structure their response to right-wing populism.





## FEPS AT WORK: OUTREACH

# PROGRESSIVE POST FAMILY

The Progressive Post is the printed and online magazine of the Foundation for European Progressive Studies. Established in 2016, its mission is to look at trends and changes occurring at national, European and international levels through the lenses of progressives and Social Democratic values, and to offer informed and thought-provoking analyses of European debates, challenges and developments. This is done thanks to the contributions of progressive policymakers, academics, experts and activists, to whom the magazine is also addressed.

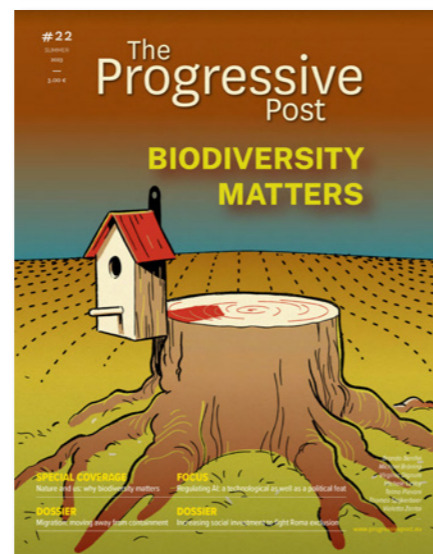
Besides the printed magazine, the Progressive Post family has other lively and flexible tools that aim to reach a wider audience using different platforms and media: the Progressive Page, FEPS Talks, the European Progressive Observatory and the Progressive Yearbook.

### Progressive Post: the magazine

The Progressive Post's primary goal is to reach out to European progressives, offering them tools to better understand the debates around key European issues while at the same time showcasing the broad analytical work done by and within FEPS. The magazine regularly features special coverage and a focus, as well as dossiers, interviews and book reviews. In the printed version, it is published three times per year.

In 2023, (issues #21, #22 and #23), the magazine tackled as usual political, social and economic and foreign policy questions. In particular, the topics addressed in the course of the year were: feminist foreign policy; one year of war in Ukraine; a reflection on the centre-right; work-life balance; biodiversity; artificial intelligence; migration; inclusion of Roma people; EU fiscal rules; progressive cities in Europe; Turkey and Latin America.

- **Issue #21** Winter/Spring edition  
**When foreign policy meets feminism**
- **Issue #22** Summer edition  
**Biodiversity matters**
- **Issue #23** Autumn/Winter edition  
**EU Fiscal rules. More democracy and ambition!**



### Progressive Page

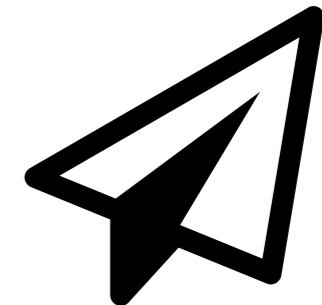
The Progressive Page is a short opinion page (about 800 words) published on the Progressive Post webpage and disseminated by a dedicated newsletter. It is written alternatively by FEPS authors (President, Secretary General and directors) and outstanding guest authors (renowned policymakers, academics and experts). In 2023, the Progressive Page was authored by members of the European Parliament, such as Pietro Bartolo, personalities such as George Papandreu and Philip Pochet, outstanding academics, such as Susan Landau. In 2022, we published 23 Progressive Pages tackling a wide range of issues, such as the war in Ukraine; the Israeli-Palestinian crisis; relations with the US; migration; future of work; social affairs.

### European Progressive Observatory

The European Progressive Observatory (EPO) aims to cover elections in Europe and key elections elsewhere. In 2023, EPO has offered its readers a sharp and timely analysis of elections in Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia and Spain. EPO articles are published on the Progressive Post website and disseminated via a dedicated newsletter.

### FEPS Talks

FEPS also appeals to those who have less time to read but some time to listen to interesting and stimulating conversations while they drive, take a bus or jog. FEPS Talks are podcasts of 20-25 minutes, each featuring a dialogue between the FEPS secretary general or FEPS policy analysts and prominent progressive policymakers, members of academia or civil society. In 2023, we recorded 15 podcasts with – among others – Anna Diamantopoulou, Gösta Esping-Andersen, Yossi Beilin, Maiara Folly, Tarik Abou-Chadi, as well as MEPs Jamila Madeira and René Repasi. The podcast series is available on different platforms such as Spotify and Apple Podcasts.





## FEPS AT WORK: TRAINING

# TRAINING



### Ambition

A year after the adoption of the FEPS Training Strategy (TS), the objectives laid out for 2023 encompassed: full implementation, inner coordination, evaluation and acceleration, as well as adjustments and innovations. These three dimensions were seen as a compass across the three initial building blocks of the TS, namely: (1) empowering – by sharing and broadening access to knowledge –, (2) equipping – by boosting capacity and ways to learn new skills –, and, (3) enabling – by fostering networks and boosting the multiplication effects. The ambition was also to build foundations for transforming the TS into the **Training Program** in 2023, to improve financial sustainability within that FEPS work dimension.

Therefore, the 2023 activities aimed to continue the FEPS trademark projects, notably concerning civic, informal, and non-formal education, as well as training. As part of the first building block – empowering – we organised the 5th jubilee edition of the **Annual Autumn Academy (AAA)**, a unique and very highly recognised project, especially by young and aspiring politicians (as several among them said during the YES – Young European Socialists Congress in Barcelona in October 2023). The AAA also is an initiative that brings together the complete leadership of the Progressive Family annually (the S&D Group's president has been among the keynote speakers since the first edition), frontbench MEPs and MPs, leading academics, senior stakeholders from trade unions, civil society and other partnering organisations. Altogether it is a 3-day event, offering a debating space for more than 200 participants. The multiple formats, which belong to what has become the '*FEPS AAA methodology*' are annually reviewed to ensure that they are the most optimal and updated and that they abide by FEPS Secretary General László Andor's definition: "effectively teaching content regarding EU politics equal to that of an academic semester in three days".

FEPS AAA remains a flagship. The 2023 plan included expanding it, with a brand new digital learning platform, the 'Open Progressive University'. The 2023

plan also included consolidating it with further links between the AAA and the national academies (belonging to pillar three of the TS), and increasing, with the help of the FEPS Comms Team, the TS' visibility and its outputs (especially when it comes to original research, by yet another well-established training project – the FEPS Young Academics Network – which, after its foundation in 2009 with the support of Karl Renner Institut, completed the final phase of its 8th cycle and a call for new members).

Within the second pillar, the emphasis was on providing more learning and training opportunities, both internally at FEPS as also in cooperation with the other sister organisations of the progressive family. This was also the motivation to launch the first **Capacity Building Seminar** (as envisaged in the adopted TS), bringing together in Brussels the sister organisations (FEPS, S&D, PES at CoR, PES, PES Women, YES, ESO, EESC representatives and Solidar). The design of this seminar is based on co-shared responsibility, whereby the involved organisations take charge of part of the programme and provide training (from their respective unique perspective) on a commonly chosen topic. The June 2023 seminar *Bring the Bills Down* was considered a great success, leading all participants to repeat it bi-annually.

Finally, in the third segment, the goal was to create a mutually reinforcing bond between the national training projects and the FEPS pan-European TS. The objective here was for FEPS to be the 'added value' (as discussed in the diverse consultative rounds leading to the adoption of the TS), to help add an important European dimension to the existing training programmes of the partners and create avenues for exchange of best practices. While in the past there was predominantly one example of such cooperation, namely the *Europapolitische Akademie* by the Karl Renner Institut, 2023 saw several other applications – helping FEPS to cooperate with members from Italy, Hungary, Spain, Serbia and Poland and allowing the engagement of more than 400 participants on the national and local level.

### Results

The ambitions for 2023 have not only been fulfilled, they kept accelerating as the year progressed. Within the first TS building block, there was the spectacular 5th edition of the FEPS AAA, which featured many innovations (including, notably, the *Future Workshop*), as also some traditional elements (as the launch of the FEPS Primers, in this case devoted to Social Europe – with professor Björn Hacker –, and to Digital Europe – with Ivana Bartoletti). Speaking about the latter, in the spirit of the objective of full implementation and inner coordination, attention was paid to dissemination – and herewith the FEPS primers were also presented at the occasion of the meeting of the FEPS Scientific Council.

Furthermore, the Open Progressive University was launched, with a robust programme of three modules (see below), which has been a ground-breaking innovation, carrying much potential for greater access to knowledge and sources to Progressives across Europe (and beyond). FEPS YAN (see below), a network of the most promising PhD candidates and post-doc scholars, continued working within six thematic working groups, receiving feedback and guidance from mentors (respectively six MEPs and scholars).

Additionally, the FEPS *Ones to Watch* Programme – gathering the most promising already elected progressive politicians from Central and Eastern Europe – met twice. The first was online, and the second took place in November in Bucharest, hosted by Victor Negrescu, MEP and PES VP and the Fundația Stânga Democratică (see below).

Within the second TS building block, in addition to the already mentioned Capacity Building Seminar, FEPS also joined forces with FES Madrid, Rafael Campalans Foundation, Pablo Iglesias Foundation and Felipe Gonzalez Foundation – and to provide (with A. Skrzypek and C. Reder as trainers) a carefully crafted on-demand training for the YES leadership (at the occasion of the YES Congress) focused on *Policy Impact – From Policy Papers Writing to Political Influence*.

Within the third TS building block, the emphasis, in 2023, was on the multiplication aspect, which also meant that FEPS invested a greater effort in the preparatory phase of the national academies – as well as in the aftermath and evaluation phase, by drawing conclusions in the form of manuals. These documents contain not only the blueprint for seminars that could be organised elsewhere on similar topics but also a selection of methods that could be replicated to help members make their events more instructive, more participatory and more inclusive.







### HIGHLIGHT 1 // FEPS YOUNG ACADEMICS NETWORK (FEPS YAN)

FEPS Young Academics Network (FEPS YAN) is a flagship FEPS initiative, established in 2009 by FEPS and the Karl Renner Institut, offering a hub for promising, progressive PhD candidates and post-doc scholars. The members of the 8th cycle pursued the research they started the year before. In 2023, two in-person seminars were organised: one, in February, in Brussels, allowing the working groups to meet key EU-level stakeholders and receive feedback on their research papers. The second took place in Vienna (featuring also lectures by László Andor, Ania Skrzypek and F. Butzlaff).

Two more seminars took place online, where the network gathered to exchange their findings and finalise their papers on the following themes: EU fiscal policy, inequalities and democracy, ecosocialism, digital democracy, migration and labour and progressive geopolitics. Throughout the process, the working groups benefited from the mentorship of leading academics (D. Tsarouhas, K. Jablonowski, C. D'Ippoliti, E. Goes, Th. M. Fröhlich) and S&D Group MEPs (J. Fernández, E. Incir, A. Agius Saliba, G. Bischoff, A. Schieder and N. Fuglsang).



### HIGHLIGHT 2 // ONES TO WATCH

The final meeting of the 2nd cycle of the Ones To Watch network took place in Bucharest, Romania in November 2023 – upon the invitation of Victor Negrescu, MEP and PES VP and the Fundația Stânga Democratică. The participants (almost 30 already elected politicians from the CEE region) came to take part in the 3-tier programme, featuring: political debates, a common learning experience and a study visit (hosted by PSD). In the course of just two days, they were received by the PSD leadership and strategists in the party's headquarters,

by the deputy prime ministers, several ministers and state secretaries at the seat of the government, MPs from the Romanian parliament, visited a local industrial zone to see examples of the progressive policies in implementation and also spent time in a round of 'country reports' (chaired by K. Golota, PES advisor for CEE). At the occasion of the seminar, a book was launched, presenting the Next Left Country Case Study on Romania by R. Ivan (at the time also Romanian minister for Europe).



### HIGHLIGHT 3 // OPEN PROGRESSIVE UNIVERSITY

The Open Progressive University (OPU) is the first-ever e-learning platform for Social Democrats and one of the cornerstone projects of the first pillar (providing knowledge) of the FEPS Training Strategy. FEPS OPU is hosted in an online Learning Management System (LMS). Its call for participants was enthusiastically answered across the EU. The OPU was inaugurated by a special session with a keynote by Paul Magnette, professor and leader of the Wallonian Parti Socialiste on *Ecosocialism as a doctrine*. The event also saw introduction remarks by Maria João Rodrigues, FEPS president and László Andor, FEPS secretary general. Afterwards, the OPU students embarked on individual learning paths – diving into the material and tasks from within the three modules: Next Left, Gender Equality and Security and Resilience, each of which saw another online lecture by Ania Skrzypek, Ann Linde and Tomas Petricek. At the end of 2023, the class graduated – leaving behind much of the instructive material produced during their time with

OPU, and much-appreciated evaluation – which will help further boost OPU's potential. Until today, it is a unique concept and Elena Gil, FEPS Training Coordinator, who masters the platform, receives many requests from within the FEPS Network to explain its functions and to work on potential avenues for further cooperation. One among them may be a new module with S&D Group on and for Ukraine.



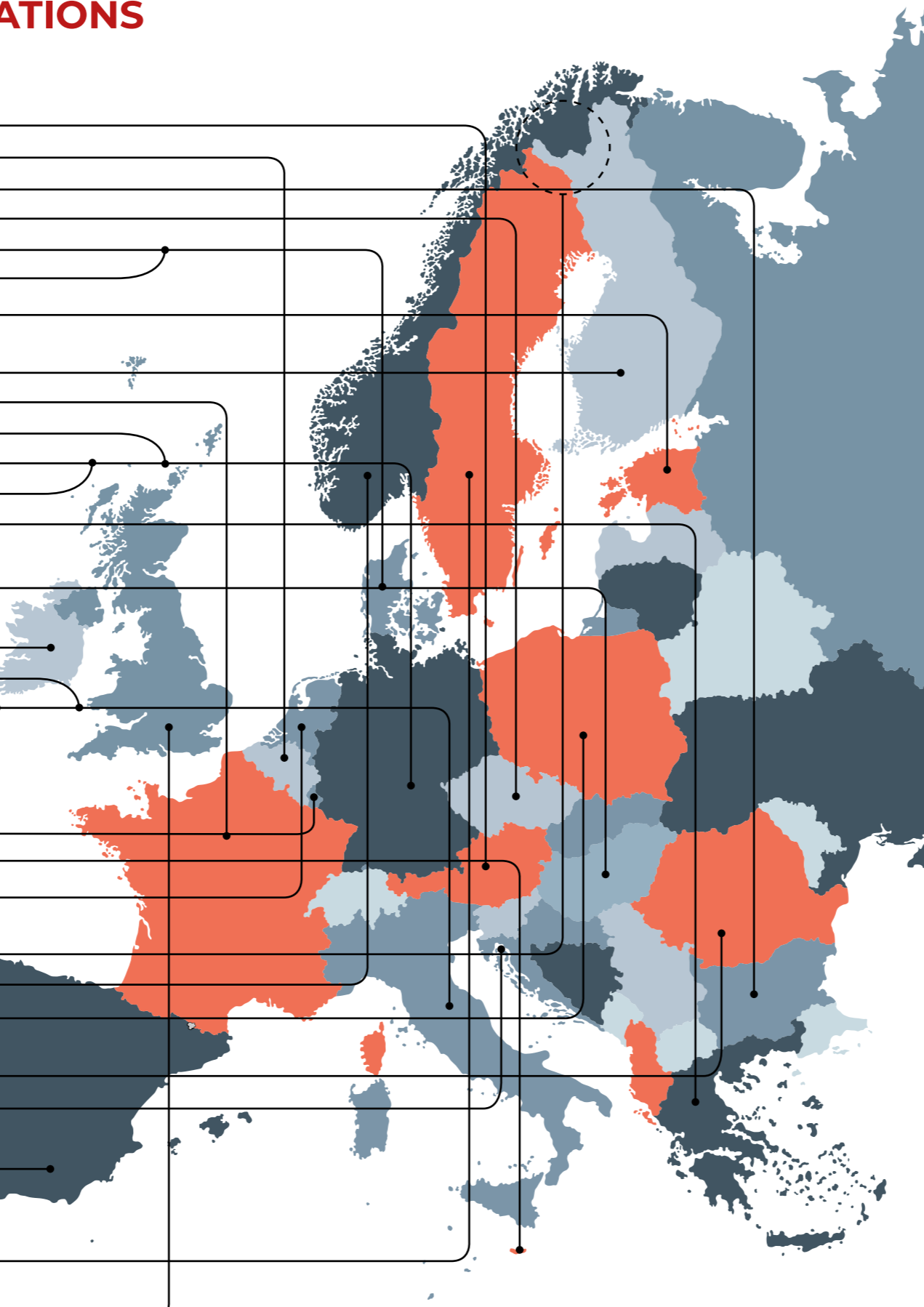




# FEPS NETWORK

## NATIONAL POLITICAL FOUNDATIONS AND THINK TANKS

- AUSTRIA** Karl Renner Institut
- BELGIUM** Institut Emile Vandervelde
- BULGARIA** Institute for Social Integration
- CZECH REPUBLIC** Masarykova Demokraticka Akademie
- DENMARK** Arbejderbevaegelsens Erhvervsrad (ECLM)
- DENMARK** Cevea
- ESTONIA** Johannes Mihkelson Centre
- EU** SOLIDAR Foundation
- FINLAND** Kalevi Sorsa Säätiö
- FRANCE** Fondation Jean-Jaurès
- GERMANY** Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
- GERMANY** DPZ (Das Progressive Zentrum)
- GERMANY** Berlin Governance Platform
- GREECE** TO DIKTIO
- HUNGARY** Policy Solutions
- HUNGARY** Tancsics Mihaly Alapitvány
- HUNGARY** Institute for Social Democracy (ISD)
- IRELAND** TASC Europe
- ITALY** Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale (CeSPI)
- ITALY** Fondazione Socialismo
- ITALY** Fondazione Gramsci
- ITALY** Fondazione Italianieuropei
- ITALY** Fondazione Pietro Nenni
- LUXEMBOURG** Fondation Robert Krieps
- MALTA** Fondazzjoni Ideat
- NETHERLANDS** Foundation Max Van Der Stoel
- NETHERLANDS** Wiardi Beckman Stichting
- NORDIC COUNCIL** SAMAK
- NORWAY** Tankesmien Agenda
- POLAND** Amicus Europæ
- PORTUGAL** ResPublica
- ROMANIA** Foundation for a Democratic Left
- SLOVENIA** Progresiva
- SPAIN** Fundación Felipe González
- SPAIN** Fundació Rafael Campalans
- SPAIN** Fundación Pablo Iglesias
- SWEDEN** Tankesmedja Tiden
- SWEDEN** Olof Palme International Centre
- UNITED KINGDOM** Progressive Britain
- UNITED KINGDOM** The Fabian Society



## OBSERVER NATIONAL FOUNDATIONS

- ALBANIA** / Foundation Qemal Stafa (FQS)
- AUSTRALIA** / Chifley Research Centre
- CANADA** / Broadbent Institute
- CHILE** / Fundación Salvador Allende
- CROATIA** / CEE Network for Gender Issues (CEE Gender Network)
- CROATIA** / Novo Društvo
- GREECE** / InSocial
- HUNGARY** / Foundation for a New Republic
- ISRAEL** / The Macro Center for Political Economics
- ITALY** / Fondazione Di Vittorio
- ITALY** / Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)
- LATVIA** / Perspective
- LITHUANIA** / Institute for Solidarity (LSDP)
- MEXICO** / FEPESP
- NETHERLANDS** / European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity
- NEW ZEALAND** / The Helen Clark Foundation
- REPUBLIC OF NORTHERN MACEDONIA** / Progress Institute
- PORTUGAL** / Fundação Mário Soares e Maria Barroso
- SERBIA** / Democratic Dialogue Network
- SERBIA** / Center for Democracy Foundation
- SLOVAKIA** / Progressive Forum – Proforum
- SLOVENIA** / Inštitut 1. Maj
- SWITZERLAND** / Social Democratic Party (SP)  
(Observer member of PES)
- SWITZERLAND** / Anny Klawa Morf Stiftung
- TURKEY** / Progressive Thought Institute
- TURKEY** / SODEV
- UNITED KINGDOM** / Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR)
- UNITED KINGDOM** / SPERI
- UNITED KINGDOM** / Greenwich Political Economy Research Centre (GPERC)
- UNITED STATES** / Center for American Progress

## EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

- EU** / Party of European Socialists
- EU** / S&D Group in the European Parliament
- EU** / PES Group in the Committee of the Regions
- EU** / PES Women
- EU** / YES - Young European Socialists

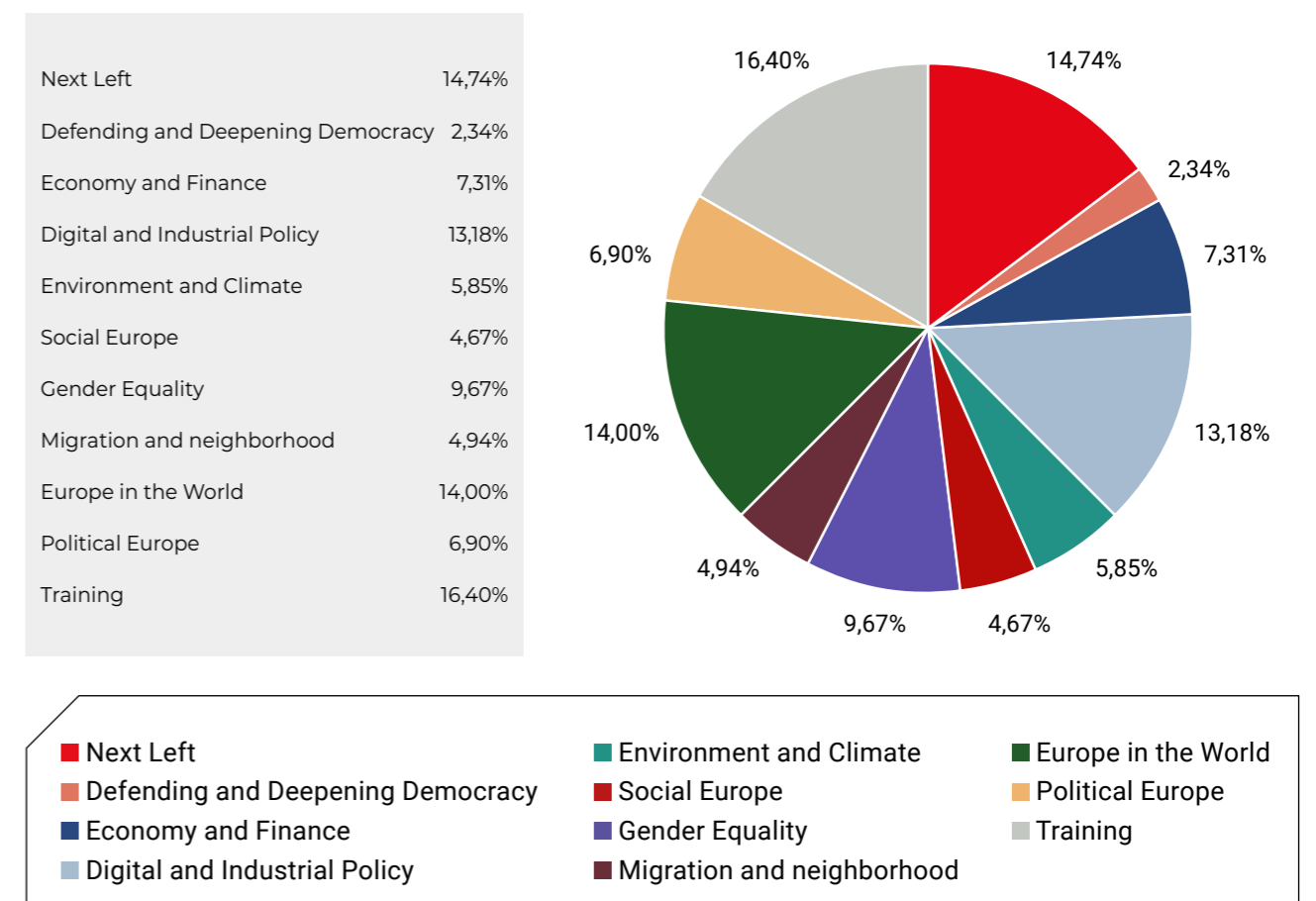


# FEPS AT WORK: FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

COSTS		
Reimbursable costs	Budget	Actual
<b>A.1: Personnel costs</b>	<b>2 374 914</b>	<b>2 654 949,46</b>
1. Salaries	2 137 423	2 392 510,47
2. Contributions	118 746	166 067,12
3. Professional training	29 686	5 012,33
4. Staff missions expenses	29 686	13 207,11
5. Other personnel costs	59 373	78 152,43
<b>A.2: Infrastructure and operating costs</b>	<b>529 095</b>	<b>841 861,90</b>
1. Rent, charges and maintenance costs	200 284	282 228,12
2. Costs relating to installation, operation and maintenance of equipment	124 233	192 298,01
3. Depreciation of movable and immovable property	145 206	286 421,99
4. Stationery and office supplies	17 812	47 880,03
5. Postal and telecommunications charges	35 624	32 344,05
6. Printing, translation and reproduction costs	2 375	689,70
7. Other infrastructure costs	3 562	0,00
<b>A.3: Administrative costs</b>	<b>1 106 599</b>	<b>1 034 092,77</b>
1. Documentation costs (newspapers, press agencies, databases)	8 906	12 443,73
2. Costs of studies and research	1 053 164	986 293,63
3. Legal costs	26 718	16 409,48
4. Accounting and audit costs	14 843	15 424,48
5. Support to third parties	0,00	0,00
6. Miscellaneous administrative costs	2 969	3 521,45
<b>A.4: Meetings and representation costs</b>	<b>979 587</b>	<b>1 145 488,64</b>
1. Costs of meetings	923 776	1 082 684,78
2. Participation in seminars and conferences	47 498	62 667,91
3. Representation costs	2 375	135,95
4. Costs of invitations	2 375	0,00
5. Other meeting-related costs	3 562	0,00
<b>A.5: Information and publication costs</b>	<b>250 355</b>	<b>252 070,27</b>
1. Publication costs	222 816	190 588,55
2. Creation and operation of Internet sites	2 504	48 129,07
3. Publicity costs	20 028	6 413,97
4. Communications equipment (gadgets)	5 007	4 760,15
5. Seminar and exhibitions	0,00	0,00
6. Other information-related costs	0,00	2 178,53
<b>A.6. Allocation to "Provision to cover eligible costs of the first quarter of year N"</b>		
<b>A. TOTAL ELIGIBLE COSTS</b>	<b>5 240 550</b>	<b>5 928 463,04</b>
<b>Ineligible costs</b>		
1. Provisions		0,00
2. Exchange losses		0,00
3. Doubtful claims on third parties		0,00
4. Contributions in kind		0,00
5.1 Expenditure from previous years		97 632,08
5.2 Financial charges		9 917,58
<b>B. TOTAL INELIGIBLE COSTS</b>	<b>0,00</b>	<b>107 549,66</b>
<b>C. TOTAL COSTS</b>	<b>5 240 550</b>	<b>6 036 012,70</b>

REVENUE		
	Budget	Actual
<b>D.1. Dissolution of "Provision to cover eligible costs of the first quarter of year N"</b>		<b>337 370,00</b>
<b>D.2. European Parliament funding</b>	<b>4 991 000,00</b>	<b>4 991 000,00</b>
<b>D.3. Membership fees</b>		<b>42 000,00</b>
3.1 from member foundations		42 000,00
3.2 from individual members		
<b>D.4 Donations</b>	<b>0,00</b>	<b>38 944,11</b>
4.1 above 500 EUR		38 944,11
<b>D.5 Other own resources</b>	<b>249 550,00</b>	<b>598 038,93</b>
Support from members of FEPS towards activities	249 550,00	578 277,55
Non-operating revenue		19 761,38
Reserve accumulated in the previous years		
D.6. Interest from pre-financing		
D.7. Contributions in kind		
<b>D. TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>5 240 550,00</b>	<b>6 007 353,04</b>
E. profit/loss (D-C)	0,00	-28 659,66
F. Allocation of own resources to the reserve account		-28 659,66
G. Profit/loss for verifying compliance with the no-profit rule (E-F)		0,00

## Activities by thematic blocks





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