

in collaboration with



Progressive Economics Network 2025
Trade, Trust, and Transition
Shaping the next Transatlantic Chapter

Wednesday, 23 April 2025 – Thursday, 24 April 2025

Washington D.C. and online

Background

With Trump back in the White House, the global trade and diplomatic landscape is shifting fast, and the EU and its partners and allies need to get their response right. The new EU Commission is rolling out a competitiveness agenda and plans for economic security, but one of the biggest questions remains: What happens to trade? And what consequences will the trade conflict have for the economy, industries and workers?

Beyond trade, the U.S. and EU are likely to take different paths on China and their broader global partnerships. This matters most for the green transition, where securing access to critical raw materials is key. With resource-rich countries becoming central players, supply chains are being redrawn, and geopolitical alliances are shifting.

But while differences are inevitable, transatlantic cooperation can't just be written off. People on both sides of the Atlantic aren't looking for confrontation—progressives, in particular, have always put people first. The challenge now is to find common ground beyond high-level politics—between parliaments, trade unions, and civil society—to keep the partnership strong and focused on shared prosperity.

About the Progressive Economics Network

The Progressive Economic Network (PEN) aims to bring together senior economic advisors, leading researchers and decision-makers from Europe and the United States. The goal of the series is to reflect on political realities on both sides of the Atlantic and put into place an economic plan that is fit for the significant transformational challenges of our economies, including armed conflicts in the Ukraine and the Middle East, the climate crisis and shifts in geopolitics.

The network offers a space to strategise, exchange best practices, and form a progressive economic policy strategy on how to tackle some of the most pressing economic challenges in the areas of fiscal, monetary, trade, industrial and social policies.

PEN is co-organised by the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS), the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) and Das Progressive Zentrum (DPZ).

Preliminary agenda

Wednesday, 23 April 2025

@ Center for American Progress (CAP), 1333 H St NW #100e, 20005 Washington, DC

12:30 pm Registrations & Networking Lunch

12:50 – 1:00 pm Opening remarks

1:00 – 3.00 pm The Emerging Trade Regime: Aligning on Shared Objectives

The Biden administration redefined U.S. trade policy by shifting its focus toward workers and communities, moving away from traditional market liberalisation. Targeted tariffs on China and Russia were implemented to strengthen domestic manufacturing and advance the administration's green technology agenda.

However, this strategic shift was not mirrored by the EU, which largely adhered to its traditional, liberal trade approach. With Trump's return disrupting global trade relations, the debate over the purpose and direction of trade policy has become even more urgent. For close partners, such as Canada and Mexico, and the EU, which are far more trade-dependent than the U.S., the stakes are particularly high in this rapidly evolving 'America First' landscape. In this session, we will explore how to address these challenges, how tariffs affect the global economy and which opportunities emerge.

Guiding questions:

- How can progressives articulate clear objectives for trade policy and align strategies to meet them?
- Is there room for constructive EU-U.S. trade engagement under Trump?
What are strategies for engaging with the Trump administration: What works and what doesn't?
- What should be the guiding compass for EU in trade relations with US and globally?
- Which opportunities emerge from trade conflicts for progressives with respect for improving working conditions and forming new trade partnerships and alliances?

Scene-Setting:

Ben Beachy*, former Special Assistant to the President for Climate Policy, Industrial Sector, & Community Investment

Comments by:

Bernd Lange, Member of the European Parliament and Chair of the Committee on International Trade (online)

Liam Byrne, MP UK Parliament, Chair of Business and Trade Committee

Elisabeth Baltzan, former Senior Advisor to the US Trade Representative

Beth Burke*, CEO of Canadian American Business Council

Chris Roberts, Director Social and Economic Policy, Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) (online)

Maria João Rodrigues, President, FEPS

3:00 pm

Coffee Break

4:00 – 6:00 pm

Guns or butter? Balancing Priorities in the Transatlantic Relationship.

Europe's priorities have dramatically shifted toward security and defence following the Trump administration's intent to withdraw from a common European security architecture. This realignment has pushed European foreign policy further to the right, with immediate security concerns potentially overriding all other objectives. Meanwhile, the U.S. faces its own "guns or butter" dilemma. The argument for reducing its military presence in Europe hinged on cost savings, but it remains unclear whether redirecting these resources would translate into greater social and economic support for America's struggling working class.

Guiding questions:

- Can a balance be found, both on strategy and financing, between "guns and butter" for the EU?
- How can trade unions push for good jobs and social priorities in this new reality? Are there opportunities to explore within the emerging focus on security?
- What are the options for continued collaboration between the U.S. and European counterparts—governments, trade unions, and the private sector? Should we advocate for a broader definition of security that includes progressive priorities?
- What does a weakening of transatlantic defense cooperation mean for trade? Notably, if Europe reduces purchases of US weapons and instead nurtures its own production?
- Could a reduced U.S. military presence in Europe lead to greater domestic investment in infrastructure, social programs, or workforce development, or will the resources be reallocated elsewhere?
- How does the U.S. reconcile its retreat from key global commitments with an increasingly confrontational foreign policy? Who wins and who loses in this new world of transactionalism?

Introductory Remarks:

Allison McManus, Interim Senior Vice President, NSIP, CAP

Scene-Setting:

Isabella Weber, Associate Professor of Economics, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Darrick Hamilton, Chief Economist, AFL-CIO

Comments:

Max Bergmann, Director of the Europe, Russia and Eurasia Program, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS); former State Department official

Brando Benifei, Member of the European Parliament and Chair of the Delegation for Relations with the United States

Armand Zorn, Member of the German Bundestag for the Social Democrats (SPD)

Ben Lennon, Climate, Industry and Energy Advisor, European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)

Michael R. Wessel, President, The Wessel Group

6:00 – 6:10 pm

Concluding remarks

7:00 - 8:30 pm

Transatlantic Networking Reception

@ Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) D.C. Office, 719 A Street, NE
20002 Washington, DC

Thursday, 24 April 2025

@ Center for American Progress (CAP), 1333 H St NW #100e, 20005 Washington, DC

9:00 – 11:00 am

The Geoeconomics of Sustainability: Forming Strategic Partnerships

The Trump administration's withdrawal from multilateral agreements presents a significant challenge to the global order, particularly in its relations with the Global South. In this approach power seems to be constrained by international rules.

While Europe remains the strongest advocate for multilateralism worldwide, this development could give the EU an option to enhance cooperation with countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia. How far can Europe advance without the US? How can the US be tied to international agreements as closely as possible?

Guiding questions:

- What strategies should be pursued to foster cooperation with developing countries? Amid an intensifying competition for critical raw materials
- As US is withdrawing its support for the developing countries, who is going to fill this space? Will it be China? Or the EU can step up its involvement?
- How can progressives ensure that this shifting geostrategic landscape does not leave smaller nations behind? Which efforts are most needed for countries in the Global South which the EU could support (like fairer global tax system, solutions to the global debt crises, better access to funds)
- What role can Europe play in securing sustainable and equitable access to critical raw materials while upholding environmental and social standards?
- What multilateral frameworks or partnerships can be leveraged or developed to ensure fair and transparent resource governance?

Scene-Setting:

Eric Voeten, Professor of Geopolitics and Justice in World Affairs, Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service and Government Department, Georgetown University

Comments:

Lina Gálvez Muñoz, Member of the European Parliament; Vice-President, FEPS

Bodo Ellmers, Program Director Financing for Development, Global Policy Forum Europe

Daria Taglioni, World Bank, Research Manager, Trade and International Integration, Development Economics

Max Neufeind, Head of Division “Fundamental Questions of Transformation; Societal Dialogue”, German Federal Chancellery

Sander Todoir, Senior Economist, Center for European Reform

11:00 - 11:15 am

Wrap Up and Concluding Remarks

**to be confirmed*