

**FEPS**  
FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN  
PROGRESSIVE STUDIES

# Annual Activity **REPORT 2024**





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# FEPS TEAM



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## MESSAGE BY THE PRESIDENT



2024 was a year of transition to another era. On the one hand, nationalist and populist far-right parties have been gaining stronger positions in societies, parliaments and governments. They have been undermining cooperation at all levels, from local and national to European and international. In November, Donald Trump's re-election as US president was the final stroke, leading the country that played a hegemonic role in the West to undermine the rules-based order and to actively support the far-right internationally. On the other hand, **pro-cooperation forces are fighting back and keeping the dominant position in some important elections**, in Latin America and the European Union.

Now, Social Democrats and progressive Europeans face the historical responsibility to lead this fight. **However, this is not about going back to the past but about building a better future.** It also requires much stronger European solutions to ensure higher European strategic autonomy and to assert European sovereignty.

First of all, internationally, the EU should support Ukraine, build European defence and security capabilities, including economic and civil ones, and protect democracy from external interferences. **But building a European defence should not sacrifice other key priorities.** Therefore, stronger European financing solutions must be found.

The **digital area** has become a critical one too. Europe has adopted leading regulations, including for AI, but it must build stronger capacities in the entire European digital stack, from cloud infrastructures to data and applications, improving citizens' lives in health, education, urban mobility and rural life.

The **green transition** needs to move forward, counting on a real European industrial policy and stronger social policy to ensure that this transition will be just and to prevent setbacks.

Moving forward with the **European Pillar of Social Rights** for all European citizens is the best antidote against the far-right. But a lot remains to be done in housing, access to health and care, integration of migrants and quality jobs, particularly for young people, as well as pushing for full gender equality, women's rights and intergenerational solidarity.

In the meantime, **working with the candidate countries for EU accession** is a central task for Progressives to strengthen progressive forces in these countries while involving them in all European networks, from the security, energy and digital ones to the ones concerning industrial, social and cultural policies.

Furthermore, **multiplying EU alliances worldwide** is emerging as a key priority, as is upholding and reforming multilateral governance, as stated by the United Nations Pact for the Future, adopted in 2024.

I am very pleased and proud that FEPS, with its qualified and engaged team plus several hundred experts across Europe, in interaction with a wide range of multi-stakeholders, **was able to address all these issues in a timely and creative sequence of projects, publications and debates.** FEPS is a welcoming hub and a rich network. It is part of a much larger movement that will raise hope in humankind and which must deliver now.

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 77 member organisations. Among these, 41 are full members, 31 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



The year 2024 became a *de facto* 'year of democracy' around the world. Many elections were held in diverse continents, inviting citizens to practice democracy while also **giving political think tanks the task of analysing societies and institutions more deeply and preparing for the policy orientation of the new cycles.**

Some of these elections were called outside the normal schedule (France, for example), while others were followed by an unusually long time to form a government coalition (in Austria, for example). This was all evidence of the extraordinary times we are currently living in, with unprecedented shifts and uncertainties, and shows that **inherited analytical templates do not necessarily work any longer.**

FEPS established **a new analytical network comprising experts in opinion polling but also academics with a sharp eye**, and, if needed, also a sharp language. We followed these electoral developments through the European Progressive Observatory (EPO), which became extremely busy in 2024. Our inputs were welcome in various fora of our political network, not least the Rome congress of the Party of European Socialists (PES), where the engagement of FEPS became a real highlight.

However, the post-election political landscape in the European Union raised a number of questions. The broader progressive spectrum in the European Parliament shrank. Though the institutional transition to a new European leadership was less convoluted than in some previous cases, it brought about a political shift towards more conservative positions, making it harder to uphold a centre-left agenda, especially after the presidential elections in the United States.

**Altogether, the great electoral year of 2024 delivered a shift to the right in the European Parliament and an ultra-conservative revolt in the US.** Interpreting these

outcomes and drawing strategic conclusions – also with a long-term policy perspective – puts our analysts and our wider network to the task. We noted with concern the swing towards the far right among young men and that this time around, the share of female representatives around the world actually fell.

While it was a year of elections, it was **also a year of international conflicts**, with ever more daunting perspectives. Russia's war in Ukraine and Israel's war in Gaza were demanding incredible sacrifices. The risk of such armed conflicts spreading further just grew, and the hope for ending these wars remained slim.

FEPS was involved in the La Hulpe Social Summit, which concluded with a declaration that, thanks to Socialists in the Spanish and Belgian governments, outlined **a social agenda for the next five years.** This progressive endeavour was served by other FEPS initiatives as well. For example, the multiannual **digital program** of FEPS came to fruition in 2024, with well-attended conferences at the European Economic and Social Committee in Brussels or the ABF House in Stockholm.

However, as the EU institutions inched towards the inauguration of new leadership in the second half of the year, the attention shifted to **economic competitiveness.** The alpha and omega of related discussions was Mario Draghi's famous report, even though the risk exists that some would interpret these contributions in fully obsolete ways. The essential question became whether the EU can avoid repeating past mistakes.

László Andor  
Secretary General

# CORE MISSION FOR 2024

For FEPS, the priority in 2024 was to draw the right conclusions from the previous cycle of EU policy-making and prepare not only for the next year but also for another 5-year period of progressive governance.

The Framework Activity Programme outlined the main tasks in terms of consolidating and delivering within **three strategically relevant dimensions**, namely:

- **For a resilient, transformed and fair Europe**
- **For a democratic and enlarged Europe**
- **For a stronger Europe shaping the New Global Order**

These headline objectives were translated into actions organised in **ten thematic chapters**, besides training activities. What the EU can do to better address the cost of living crisis, boost the resilience against recessions, and move ahead with the green, digital, and social transformation has been a key question on the minds of many. At the same time, it remained vital to focus on a stronger democracy and the rule of law, to bring peace and hope to the wider Europe, and prepare EU enlargement and internal institutional reform at the same time. As a third angle of this triangle, we also had to pay attention to boosting the global role of the European Union with a focus on peace, climate and SDGs, while upholding multilateralism and ensuring strategic autonomy.

Learning from the experience of the closing cycle was also organised around legacy speeches of outgoing EU Commissioners, like Elisa Ferreira (cohesion and reform) and Helena Dalli (equality). Interviews with MEPs ending their work in Brussels, like Agnes Jongerius and Sergei Stanishev, also allowed for **thoughtful stock taking** on diverse subjects.

On the other hand, looking ahead, the vision for an ever stronger, sustainable union inspired project design and the overall structuring of our research programmes and public discussions. A new model 'policy conference' served as an innovative platform to discuss key policies of the coming period, with leading experts from the member states exchanging views with EU officials.

Looking for ways to deepen and **enlarge** the EU simultaneously became a major preoccupation. One innovation was to organise a conference on EU enlargement, including representatives from all countries of the Western Balkans, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and Turkey.

Our emblematic **Call to Europe** events remained focused on Council presidencies: in Belgium with Commissioner Nicolas Schmit, and in Hungary with a lineup of MEPs from the S&D group. Our regular engagement with the **United Nations** agenda delivered a unique product under the title A New Global Deal, as a major progressive contribution to the Summit of the Future from European Socialist thinkers.

All this was meant to serve the strategic positioning of Social Democracy in Europe. In the same vein, but with a long-term perspective, FEPS also deepened its engagement in training, for example by preparing the **Open Progressive University** to serve the intellectual development of progressive young people in Ukraine, or adding new volumes to the Primer Series (on artificial intelligence and climate policy).

Between the Skylla of our membership's uneven capacities and the Charybdis of pressures from the regulatory environment, FEPS in 2024 navigated towards delivering on its tasks to the satisfaction of our stakeholders, old and young.

# KEY FACTS AND FIGURES 2024

2024 was a particularly challenging year, especially in anticipating the developments ahead. It was not only a super-electoral year – with polls announcing tectonic shifts in the national, European and especially American political landscapes – but also a turning point in the prolonged polycrisis.

The multilayered global tensions saw increased promptness for confrontation. The brutal Russian war against Ukraine continued, and the pressures exerted by other international actors grew, leading to yet another race in securing further influence and resources. Amid all that, the European progressive family felt a historical responsibility to be the one to stand for the model that is rooted strongly in principles of democracy and peace, as well as to aspire to long-term thinking about the EU as a project. It is a project that should continue playing a crucial role in the new international order, it needs to be multilateral, balanced and focused on development, progress and prosperity for all. This requires the EU to become stronger, reform and deepen internally and expand internationally. This is where the inspiration for FEPS to decide on a new set and a new hierarchy of three top priorities:

- 1) **For a resilient, transformed and fair Europe:** addressing the cost-of-living crisis, strengthening the resilience against recessions and moving on with the green, digital and social transformations.
- 2) **For a democratic and enlarged Europe:** focusing on stronger democracy and the rule of law, bringing peace and hope to the wider Europe, preparing for EU enlargement and internal institutional reform.
- 3) **For a stronger Europe shaping the new global order:** boosting the global role of the EU with a focus on peace, climate and SDGs, while upholding multilateralism and ensuring strategic autonomy.

Concretely, these translate into the following objectives across the **10 thematic fields (plus training)**:

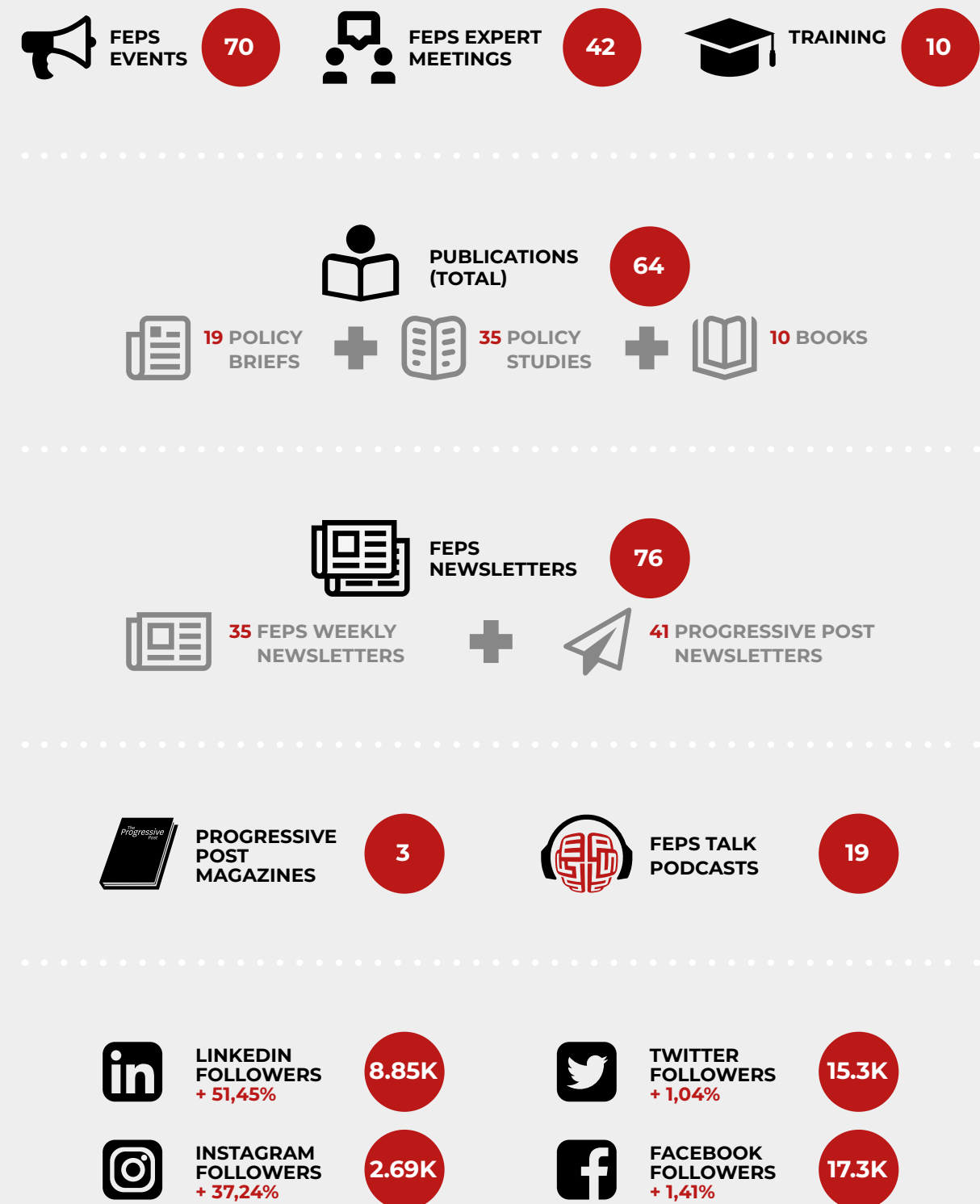
- 1. **EUROPE IN THE WORLD** – focusing on the EU's role in striving for peace and development in a new multipolar global order, nurturing transatlantic relations but also stronger ties with the Global South, with a focus on foresight capabilities, European strategic autonomy, and the EU's commitment to the reconstruction and gradual integration of Ukraine.
- 2. **MIGRATION** – informing and sustaining a fair debate on asylum and migration, with a particular focus on monitoring the implementation of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum and fostering adequate integration policies, defining the features of an efficient and humane management of migration and developing fair and balanced relations with the countries of origin and transit; whilst analysing the nexus between demographic changes in Europe and migration dynamics.
- 3. **SOCIAL EUROPE** – ensuring the relevance and implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights in the new legislature, expanding social objectives and EU integration in the field of health and wellbeing, deepening the debate on decent work alongside the promotion of a new approach to public services and housing policies, while fighting new poverty and anticipating demographic change.
- 4. **ECONOMY AND FINANCE** – designing a resilient and sustainable economic development model, to design policy proposals towards a job-rich industrial policy, European fiscal capacity and fair taxation to support the innovative, fair and productive economy, and scaling up of economic democracy.
- 5. **CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT** – addressing the climate emergency and supporting the implementation of the European Green Deal, with a commitment to search for further equitable ways to reach ambitious climate and environmental goals globally, create new clean jobs and mainstream climate and ecological objectives in European policies.
- 6. **DIGITAL ECONOMY AND SOCIETY** – assessing the effects of accelerated digital transformation for European societies and economies, exploring how AI impacts workers, how we keep our democracy healthy in times of social media and how Europe can create its digital model for an autonomous, progressive path towards technological development that supports public services.
- 7. **GENDER EQUALITY** – strengthening the commitment to the feminist and gender equality agenda, with a focus on preventing backlash, delivering substantive equality through transformative and gender mainstreamed policies.

8. **POLITICAL EUROPE** – examining the functioning of and potential for the reforms within the institutional architecture of the European Union, with a mission to inspire the transition to a new model of integration that will allow for further deepening and enlargement.

9. **DEFENDING AND DEEPENING DEMOCRACY** – analysing the main threats to democracy (far right politics, authoritarian tendencies, nationalism) within but also outside the European Union – to find ways to foster

participatory and representative democracy, with a specific focus on young people.

10. **FUTURE OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY** – evaluating the positioning of the progressive forces across the levels of governance, with a focus on their programmatic and strategic dilemmas, organisational difficulties and electoral appeal, governing capacities, and abilities to remain constructive opposition and to bounce back from the crises.

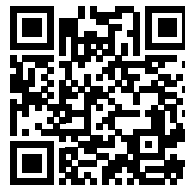




## FEPS AT WORK: RESEARCH AND STUDIES

### MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

# ECONOMY AND FINANCE



#### Ambition

2024 was a year of reorientation of European economic policy priorities. Competitiveness, productivity and innovation have risen to the top of the EU agenda. As the EU entered a new legislative term, **hard-fought social and environmental achievements from the European Green Deal to the European Pillar of Social Rights have come under pressure from political push-back and corporate resistance.**

In 2024, FEPS has advanced a vision of a Europe that is not just reactive but steps up to secure a resilient and forward-looking economy, **a Europe that not only weathers crises but also actively drives a just, green and inclusive transition.** A job-rich industrial policy that leaves no one behind must be at the heart of this vision, alongside an ambitious European fiscal capacity, scaled-up economic democracy practices, and fair taxation policies that support innovation, equality and shared prosperity.



#### Results

Early 2024 was marked by a crisis around food prices and farmers' plight, with multiple farmers' protests across Europe. FEPS' ongoing work on this topic was very timely in calling for progressive solutions to the problem. On 30 January, FEPS hosted a meeting of the Progressive Economics Network (PEN) ***Towards a progressive toolbox to deal with inflation***, involving a prominent expert in the field, Isabella Weber, Associate Professor of Economics at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Immediately after, we posted a Progressive Post article titled *'Food prices are high. Why are farmers angry?'* which became the most-viewed article in our magazine that year. We have also commissioned a policy study on *The profits-prices spiral in food and energy: analysis and toolbox to fight inflation* which will be finalised in 2025. We have further advanced the discussion on the need for a new framework to deal with inflation at the November 2024 meeting of PEN (see Highlight 3). Our goal is to challenge the mainstream narrative on inflation as a demand-side problem and to show that in the recent crisis in 2021-2023, inflation was driven by supply-side shock and corporate profiteering. Ultimately, **we want to push for a new inflation governance framework that would be able to deal with inflation induced by supply-side shocks.**

Another major stream of our work was on **economic democracy**, continuing the project we started in 2023 in collaboration with the Open Society Foundations. The aim of the project is to explore and spread best practices and strategies to build people's power in the economic domain. Our understanding is that the extreme inequality of economic outcomes is a consequence of undemocratic decision-making in the economic domain, both at the firm and at the overall economy level. Therefore, to build a fair economy that would benefit all, we are promoting policy ideas for more democratic economic governance.

As **competitiveness and industrial policy** have become top EU priorities, FEPS has increasingly engaged with these topics. Although it is not a traditionally centre-left

topic, we saw a clear need to develop a progressive vision for industrial policy. To this end, we published a policy brief on *Progressive foundations for modern European industrial policy*, outlining the main principles and elements of the industrial policy for Europe. Notably, we call for a bigger role of the state (both at the EU and member state level) in steering industrial policy. Industrial policy was also a focus of two major events we hosted in 2024 – The Progressive Economic Policy Conference in Brussels and the Progressive Economic Network meeting in Berlin (see Highlights 2 and 3). As industrial policy is a cross-cutting issue, other portfolios – digital, climate and environment – also have a major workstream on the topic.

Promoting **fair taxation** is an ongoing topic at FEPS. In 2024, we ran three initiatives on taxation: A project on capital income taxation in cooperation with the Kalevi Sorsa Foundation, resulting in a policy study (finalised in 2025) and two projects in support of the European Citizens Initiative (ECI) 'Tax the rich' in collaboration with our members the Institute for Social Democracy in Hungary and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Bratislava Office and Proforum in Slovakia. Although the ECI did not reach the necessary signatures for the European Commission to propose legislation on the issue, both campaigns raised public awareness of the need to tax greater wealth through local events and social media activities. In addition, they strengthened the coalition-building on the issue with trade unions, student initiatives, journalists and politicians, fostering lasting support for the cause in both countries.

Towards the end of 2024, we started to engage more with the topic of the **EU budget and investment capacity** to contribute to the discussion on the new MFF and how to finance the European industrial policy. In particular, we held dedicated sessions on these topics at our two major events this year (see Highlights 2 and 3). We have also started informal discussions on the next MFF with the S&D Group in the European Parliament.





## HIGHLIGHT 1 // PROGRESSIVE ECONOMIC POLICY CONFERENCE

### EVENT

In September 2024, we joined forces with the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the S&D Group in the European Parliament to bring together progressive organisations, representatives of the social-democratic movement and trade unions for a **Progressive Economic Policy Conference**. The event kicked off with a speech by the former European Commissioner for Equality, Helena Dalli, on *Anchoring equality in the new European agenda* and a high-level talk with ETUC Secretary General Esther Lynch and S&D Vice-President Gabriele Bischoff on *Supporting workers in the transitions and ensuring quality jobs*. In the last afternoon and on the following day, six roundtables on the EU's key economic policy challenges took place to discuss several critical priorities of progressives and trade unions, including:

- Continuing the social agenda anchored to the **European Pillar of Social Rights**
- Protecting and expanding the **EU Green Deal** principles, policies and reach
- Ensuring the **quality of work** and good employment amidst the transitions
- Upholding upward convergence, territorial cohesion and **equality**

Building on the conference's background notes and discussions, we published a policy paper on '**Forging the new EU agenda**' together with the FES that reflects on the key economic challenges and outlines priorities for the progressives during the new EU legislature, including strengthening Europe's socio-economic model, industrial policy for full-capacity Europe, and a global and sustainable Europe.



## HIGHLIGHT 2 // BUILDING AN ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY IN EUROPE

### POLICY STUDY LAUNCH

As part of our project on Economic Democracy, we published a **policy study on Building economic democracy in Europe – concepts, cases and achieving progressive change** with the research team from the University of Glasgow Andrew Cumbers (professor of political economy), Karen Bilsland (lecturer in organisational behaviour) and Robert McMaster (professor of political economy). The study provides insights from interviews with changemakers in the domains of public spending, employment and public services who were invited to present and exchange at the **public launch conference of the study at the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)** in July 2024. To disseminate the study's results further, we collaborated with the Institute for Economic Democracy (IED) in Slovenia and hosted a FEPS fringe event on employee ownership in the EU at the **3rd Congress of Economic Democracy**. Next to our work in collaboration with the OSF, we continued to promote the concept of economic democracy further at a panel discussion on this topic as part of the Day of Progressive Economic Policy in Berlin on 20 March.



## HIGHLIGHT 3 // PROGRESSIVE ECONOMICS NETWORK

### EVENT

This year, PEN met for a two-day event in Berlin at the FES Office, the German chancellery and the DPZ office, addressing the issues of shock preparedness and resilience, a progressive vision for industrial policy and competitiveness as well as EU investment capacity in the new mandate. Amidst the German government crisis in November 2024, we convened high-level policymakers Holger Fabig (German federal chancellery), Thomas Dermine (former Belgian state secretary), Liam Byrne (MP UK) and Zoltán Vajda (MP Hungary) as well as economic thought-leading researchers including Isabella Weber (University of Massachusetts Amherst) and Francesca Bria (UCL).

The three main sessions strongly called for strengthening economic shock preparedness, a more integrated European single market and a common European industrial policy, and more own resources and infrastructure investments in Europe.





# FEPS AT WORK: RESEARCH AND STUDIES

## MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

# ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE



### Ambition

The latest IPCC report mentions a **fast-closing window of opportunity to limit global warming** before it produces disastrous consequences and socio-economic devastation, adding pressure to the plethora of challenges progressives face. In this context, the cost-of-living crisis and a narrow approach to competitiveness risk slowing down the climate agenda, increasing the negative impacts of extreme weather events and environmental damages for current and future generations.

To address these interconnected challenges, **FEPS made a strong point to link the climate and social agenda, notably by focusing on Just Transition, the labour market consequences of the European Green Deal and the impact of EU trade policies in the developing world.** This reflects the climate portfolio's plans to equip policymakers with the tools required to navigate the complex social and economic consequences of climate transformation and ensure climate action and well-being are compatible with policy practice. Simultaneously, FEPS also aims to provide citizens

at large with a window into the evolution of EU policy by **tracking the progress of the European Green Deal while keeping a clear moral compass pointing towards social and climate justice.**

Hence, keeping in mind these guiding principles, FEPS' climate portfolio structured its work through several parallel and mutually reinforcing streams of work:

**Racing to scale up clean technologies**, promoting a unified EU clean-tech industrial strategy that empowers its private sector to keep up with external competitors and maintain its position as a global leader;

**Combatting climate injustices**, tackling existing socio-economic inequalities that endanger the path to a clean future with negative distributional impacts;

**Managing the labour market upheaval**, starting with better understanding of the effects and mechanisms involved in achieving the targets laid out in the European Green Deal.

### Results

Building upon the framework and partnerships established in previous years, FEPS renewed its cooperation agreement with FES in the form of the **2024 FEPS-FES Climate Programme**, under which FEPS' climate portfolio managed to expand its identified lines of work. This allowed us not only to develop new projects in response to the evolving European context, but also to consolidate the work started in previous years. The best example of this is our longstanding cooperation with CEE Bankwatch and Solidar under the "Territorial Just Transition plans as a means towards regional justice" project (see highlight 1). Another example is the development of the "SEER employment simulation of climate action" project (see highlight 2), which started in 2023 and will continue generating high-value research outputs into 2025.



Among the many transversal topics addressed by the climate portfolio in 2024, FEPS tackled energy poverty through the idea of an **energy minimum right** as an instrument to ensure that citizens can access reliable, acceptable, quality and sustainable energy amid a context marked by severe price hikes and the cost-of-living crisis. For this purpose, FEPS organised a hybrid expert roundtable in June 2024, gathering academics and civil society representatives to discuss the path to an energy minimum right and the implications of such a policy.

Approaching the question of how to address climate change from a global perspective, FEPS also examined the sustainability and resilience of our **global critical**

**raw materials supply chains** through the organisation of an expert roundtable in November 2024, including a presentation of our policy study on Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) (see policy contributions). Building resilient supply chains requires addressing calls for equal partnerships, integrating justice considerations in the EU's external environmental action, and diversifying energy-related partnerships. FEPS paid special attention to how the creation of a common and coherent understanding of justice, especially in situations of scarce resources, would go a long way in accelerating the wide-scale social, political, and economic transformations that are needed to address climate change.



### HIGHLIGHT 1 // TERRITORIAL JUST TRANSITION PLANS AS A MEANS TOWARDS REGIONAL JUSTICE PROJECT

Building on the strong collaboration between FEPS, the CEE Bankwatch Network, Solidar and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), following the stakeholder meetings held in 2022 and 2023, FEPS continued the discussion around EU Just Transition policies with the organisation of two events in 2024. The first of them, under the title **Just Transition beyond 2024**, took place in Budapest in October 2024 alongside the wider Call to Europe conference.

This allowed local and regional representatives from CEE regions particularly affected by Just Transition funding to share their perspectives, feeding the ongoing discussion. The event was followed in December by the **2024 Just Transition stakeholder meeting** in Brussels, in which national campaigners got the opportunity to meet with European policymakers in a closed-door discussion of the next MFF, structured along five working groups addressing a different dimension. The outputs of this last event will be consolidated and published in a policy brief to be discussed at the next stakeholder meeting in 2025.

### HIGHLIGHT 2 // SEER PROJECT

#### PROJECT

The SEER Project aims to provide a science-based tool that can support policymakers in implementing European Green Deal (EGD) policies by providing a detailed understanding of the socio-economic effects of systemic, transition-related changes. Plainly said, the goal is to answer two questions:

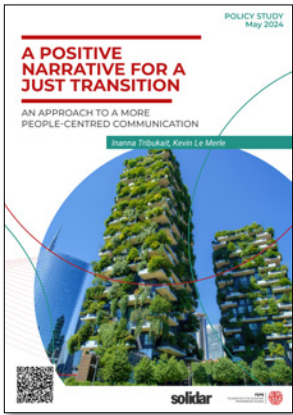
1. How could EGD policies affect the EU labour market?
2. What are the pathways to reach the EGD's social and environmental targets?

The answer to these questions, involving a transdisciplinary approach built on policy analysis, system dynamics modelling, and social simulations, will be outlined throughout a series of three Policy Studies,

the first of which (**Expected labour market effects of the Green Deal Industrial Plan: The potential of labour policies for just transition regions**) was published in April 2024. This publication will be followed by two additional studies examining the model and its implications in 2025.



# POLICY CONTRIBUTIONS



A positive narrative for Just Transition: An approach to a more people-centred communication

POLICY STUDY

This policy study by Inanna Tribukait and Kevin Le Merle develops the basis for a convincing narrative on the Just Transition. It first identifies obstacles currently in the way of effective climate communication, mobilising input from climate psychology. The study analyses several narratives that actively jeopardise climate action. These include denialist, delayerist and doom narratives. Following that, it explores how a different, justice-based narrative can be created, grounded on concrete examples of effective climate action across communities in the EU. Finally, it provides recommendations that can be used to adopt and deliver positive climate narratives more broadly.

The study recommends **focusing on social justice** when thinking about climate action, so it accounts for socio-economic disparities, racism, and gender inequalities. Ignoring these aspects can lead to socially unjust outcomes, such as 'renovictions' and green gentrification.

It is crucial to develop narratives highlighting the immediate impacts of the climate crisis on everyday life, linking these effects to broader social injustices. This approach helps to create more relatable and urgent narratives, countering the trend of viewing climate action as beneficial only in the long term.



A unified industrial strategy for the EU: Industrial policy recommendations to promote decarbonisation, competitiveness and cohesion in Europe

POLICY STUDY

This paper, co-authored by Lukas Bertram, Lydia Korinek, Sebastian Kiecker and Jakob Hafele, outlines three key aspects necessary for a successful **EU industrial strategy** that bridges multiple objectives.

- Firstly, we emphasise the need to focus on strategic industries and key value chain segments. To address all the policy objectives of an EU industrial strategy, we propose different processes for identifying strategic industries for each objective. To prioritise the most strategic industries, we propose an approach combining quantitative data and qualitative expertise.
- Secondly, the paper introduces a regional potential map. This tool can be used to conduct a multidimensional analysis of the long-term economic potential of all EU regions. In two case studies, we demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach by identifying high-potential regions for strategic industries. These examples show how unlocking the economic potential of EU regions can promote economic cohesion and facilitate a Just Transition for workers and regions.
- Thirdly, we propose a multi-level governance model that combines centralised coordination within the Commission with active involvement from member states and regions.

Through this paper, we aim to advance discussion on a cohesive EU industrial strategy that balances multiple policy objectives and benefits all Member States and regions.



Evaluating the impact of CBAM on developing countries: The EU's new approach to multilateralism and trade

POLICY STUDY

This policy study by Suranjali Tandon and Kevin Le Merle provides **a critical analysis of the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) from the perspective of developing countries**, emphasising the potential economic impacts and trade-related tensions that may arise from its implementation. While the EU's commitment to decarbonisation through the European Green Deal is admirable, the CBAM's design and enforcement could impose costs on developing nations, particularly those with close trade ties to the EU. The CBAM aims to prevent carbon leakage by applying a carbon price on imports; however, its effectiveness remains to be seen.

The study also addresses the broader implications of the CBAM for global cooperation on climate change, especially in a context of strained multilateralism. As developing countries view the CBAM as an external imposition rather than a purely internal EU measure, it risks exacerbating trade tensions and undermining international climate agreements. Furthermore, the economic impact on developing countries may exceed the revenues generated by the CBAM, leading to calls for compensatory measures.

The brief concludes with recommendations for developing nations to engage in negotiations with the EU to ensure a more equitable implementation of the CBAM, considering the principles of climate justice and the unique challenges faced by lower-income countries in adapting to stringent environmental standards.



A European clean growth mindset

POLICY BRIEF

'Clean growth' versus 'degrowth' is a highly contentious political debate, which it should not to be. The seeming clash of worldviews is more about rhetoric than actual policy. First and foremost, it distracts from focusing on the actual policies needed to cut greenhouse gas emissions quickly while keeping competing priorities in mind.

In this policy brief, Gernot Wagner highlights how making the green transition work for people and the planet is key to achieving sustainable emissions cuts without stirring political resentment and policy retrenchment. Doing so means finding a balance between energy efficiency measures on the one hand, and research, development, and the rapid deployment of new, cleaner technologies on the other – between demand-side policies that guide behaviour and energy use in the right direction, and the clean (re)industrialisation of Europe and the world.

The global clean energy race is on. Europe must take advantage of its policy environment and structural advantages, unique among advanced economies, while minimising some of the potential disadvantages. This requires finding the right balance between decarbonising Europe's economy domestically and leading the rest of the world to do so. By balancing the demands of domestic consumers, producers and citizens with their global counterparts, while helping stabilise the global climate in the process, Europe can square the circle of green growth.



# FEPS AT WORK: RESEARCH AND STUDIES

## MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

# DIGITAL AND INDUSTRIAL POLICY



### Ambition

In the past years, the EU has undertaken a regulatory push regarding digital markets, services and data. This reconfirmed Europe's role as the global rule-setter in the digital world. After the GDPR, we now have the **Digital Services and Digital Markets Acts** and the **Data Governance and Data Act** in place that could have a 'Brussels effect' far beyond the EU's borders. Two other flagship legislative files, the **Platform Work Directive** and the **AI Act**, were added to this list in 2024.

Whether this new regulatory framework is enough to change the dynamics of the digital economy remains to be seen. Past experiences should make us wary and realistic about the effectiveness of rules to stop the trend where the power of Big Tech firms seems to grow exponentially over time. Since the release of ChatGPT, the realisation has become mainstream that AI and the fourth industrial revolution are gathering momentum fast.

**The free and open internet we were promised has instead turned into several walled gardens in the private hands of a few of tech billionaires.** During the first industrial revolution, an unregulated advance of capitalism led to a further commodification of life. We see the same happening in the current industrial revolution, where most internet users' online behaviour is now monetised, formerly personal space can be rented out instantaneously, and gig platforms circumvent labour law to create a workforce that is homogenous, powerless and always available.

The narrative is that the wave of innovation of this industrial revolution will eventually benefit everyone. And yet, history shows that unregulated capitalism creates significant inequality, and benefits never spread automatically. We see that today, with inequality rising across the board, a few big tech firms have amassed enormous power and wealth. In this context, we can summarise the ambitions of the FEPS' Digital portfolio along two main lines of inquiry:

### Framing AI in the workplace

AI is expected to impact most jobs in Europe. This will lead to profound changes in the workforce, requiring many Europeans to reskill and upskill. Besides the future of work, the working conditions of more and more workers are already starting to be affected by algorithms in the workplace. The platform workers were at the forefront of this revolution in automatic management, but with these practices are spreading to traditional sectors. It raises concerns about workers' rights and the influence of workers' representatives. Within EU policy-making, the direction of the AI Act and the Platform Work Directive will be essential and determine whether the EU can set guardrails for AI to operate in a human-centric and value-driven manner.

### Creating Public Digital Infrastructure

For a large part, European society depends on US-based Big Tech firms to provide the tools they need in a digitalised world. **Tools developed with a profit motive often work based on data hoarding**, which not only goes against the privacy of Europeans but also does not fit the needs of civil society or public services in Europe. From a perspective of strategic autonomy and industrial policy, Europe must reduce its dependency on a non-European digital domain. This means investing, for example, in public digital infrastructure that provides European citizens and organisations with alternatives. This is especially relevant for (public) media, education, health, (public) transport and public services that now have no option but to use Silicon Valley-created tools on their own terms. They could benefit from an open-source alternative digital ecosystem developed by civic tech based on European values. This could provide solutions for deep-rooted issues in social media that lead to disinformation and mental health issues, and even threaten our democracy.

### Results

2024 was the second and final year of the **FEPS-Nordic digital programme on algorithms in the workplace**, and also the year in which the core of its research was published, and then disseminated through a series of high-level conferences in Brussels and Scandinavian capitals. This work, which is to be continued in 2025 and 2026, was structured along three research strands:

- **Research Strand 1: Firm-level case studies of algorithmic management.**
- **Research strand 2: Workers' experience of algorithmic management.**
- **Research strand 3: Online platforms, employment terms and algorithms**

Put together, the tangible outputs of the Digital Programme can be outlined as **11 policy studies** (mainly in English, but also in Danish, Swedish, Finnish and Norwegian), **11 public events** to disseminate them, a substantial degree of media visibility across the studied countries, and an active network of foundations, research institutes and labour unions that will set the base for the next digital programme.

Showcasing the visibility of FEPS' work and impact on public debate, the Digital Programme's various

publications and activities have attracted many interested parties, from policymakers to other researchers and journalists. Its publications have received considerable media coverage, mainly in Nordic countries, but also in EU labour organisations and institutions. The relevance of the research subject, algorithmic management in the workplace, as well as our close connections with Nordic labour unions for the development and dissemination of the research, allowed us to promote them through a series of well-attended public events throughout the Nordic countries, and to develop links with local worker organisations.

Aside from the digital programme, FEPS also looked towards the future of the wider **EU digital policy as the 2019-2024 legislature came to an end, marking an exceptionally active period of tech policymaking.** After the GDPR, we got the DSA, DMA, DGA, DA, MFA, AIA, etc., a long series of acronyms to regulate the new digital world. Europe may have become the global tech regulator through the 'Brussels effect', but it remains a technology taker. How do we, as Europe, address this challenge? To answer this question, FEPS gathered nine experts and collected their recommendations in the **policy study Time to build a European digital ecosystem** (see policy contributions).





## HIGHLIGHT 1 // COMPUTER IN COMMAND: DO THE CONSEQUENCES OF ALGORITHMIC MANAGEMENT FOR WORKERS REQUIRE EU POLICY ACTION?

### EVENT

This public conference, hosted on 16 October at the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), presented the digital programme outcomes to a large EU-wide expert public through a high-level discussion of its main results. Building on the network and recognition earned through the timeliness of the topics addressed, FEPS worked together with the EESC to host a half-day conference connecting **Nordic researchers and labour union experts with European institutions and civil society representatives.**

The conference opened with a keynote speech by **Prof. Phoebee Moore**, in which she raised the alarm about the risks that algorithmic management brings to the workplace, and the key role both labour unions and EU policymakers must play if they want to avoid a catastrophic backsliding on social rights.

This was followed by a series of presentations of both the Digital Programme's conclusions and the

upcoming EESC opinion on algorithmic management, involving panel discussions with institutional actors, experts, and trade unionists, and finalised with closing remarks by **Nicolas Schmit**, Nicolas Schmit, then European Commissioner for jobs and social rights.



## HIGHLIGHT 2 // ALGORITHMIC GOVERNANCE AND THE SWEDISH MODEL: IMPACT OF ALGORITHMIC MANAGEMENT ON WORKERS AND CO-DETERMINATION OPPORTUNITIES

### EVENT

This half-day conference was organised by FEPS together with the Nordic think tanks and labour unions Akademikerförbundet SSR, Arena Idé, Tankesmedjan Tiden, FES Nordics, LO Sweden and the partners of the FEPS-Nordics Digital Programme as a way to close this chapter and open the way towards the next steps of the FEPS digital portfolio.

The conference was about how the Swedish model – at both the central and local levels – confronts and is confronted by new digital technologies like algorithmic management tools and what challenges lie ahead for the labour movement and workers. It reflected the European dimension of the matter and the role that labour unions can still play in shifting the statu quo towards a positive future.

As the highlight of the evening, FEPS was honoured to welcome as keynote speaker **Daron Acemoglu**, Institute Professor at MIT, laureate of the 2024 Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences. As author of *Power and Progress: Our Thousand-Year Struggle Over Technology and Prosperity*, he was able to set the scene for a critical discussion on the role that organised labour and progressive policymakers

have to play to implement algorithmic management in an effective and worker-friendly way, offering us a realistic but hopeful perspective on what awaits for us in the workplace of tomorrow.



# POLICY CONTRIBUTIONS



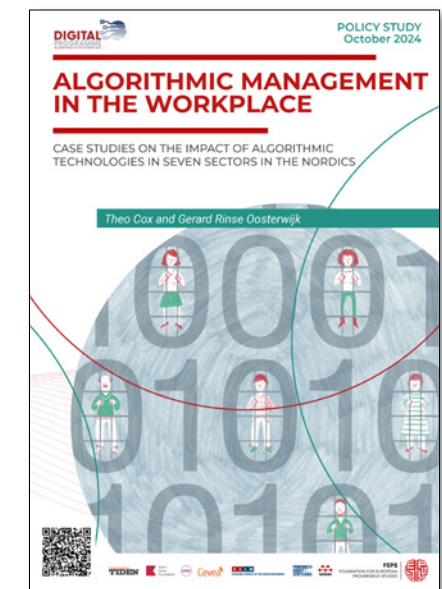
### Time to build a European digital ecosystem: Recommendations for the EU's digital policy

#### POLICY STUDY

The beginning of the new EU mandate means the closure of a very productive legislature in the digital domain. Landmark regulations such as the Digital Services Act (DSA) and the Digital Markets Act (DMA) have reshaped the EU's digital landscape, while Europe was the first to legislate artificial intelligence (AI). Now, the European Union is at a crossroads in its digital transformation. Geopolitical tensions and growing reliance on foreign tech giants underscore the urgent need for greater technological sovereignty.

The policy study 'Time to build a European ecosystem' outlines critical steps for the EU to **reduce digital dependencies and create a resilient, autonomous, and socially inclusive digital framework**. The study emphasises the importance of enforcing existing digital regulations and creating a European Digital Industrial Policy (EDIP) to drive innovation and secure European values.

The new European Commission will have to ensure digital gatekeepers like Google and Meta comply with existing legislation – and enforce them when needed. Critical recommendations for the new EC focus on creating a unified digital industrial strategy, including developing a 'EuroStack', a European technology framework encompassing hardware, infrastructure, AI, data and governance.



### Algorithmic management in the workplace

#### POLICY STUDY

Algorithmic management, utilising algorithms and artificial intelligence to oversee and direct workers, is increasingly shaping the landscape of European workplaces. While narratives of technology-driven workplace transformation are alluring, the realities of increasingly automated and digitalised management present cause for concern. This policy study explores these impacts with a focus on the unique labour environments of the Nordic countries – Finland, Sweden and Norway – where long-standing traditions of labour organisation intersect with rapidly advancing technologies.

The report uncovers how these digital tools can exacerbate worker stress, diminish autonomy and heighten job insecurity through **detailed case studies across various sectors, including transport, retail, and finance**. However, it also identifies scenarios where meaningful worker participation and robust union involvement have mitigated these negative effects, showcasing the potential for more equitable outcomes.

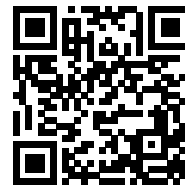
This report advocates for a European approach that prioritises worker welfare alongside technological advancement, **drawing lessons from the Nordic model to guide policy across the continent**. A series of recommendations is offered to protect worker rights and well-being in the short term, but also to address the growing power imbalance between labour and capital – an imbalance that emerging technologies risk deepening.



# FEPS AT WORK: RESEARCH AND STUDIES

## MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

# SOCIAL EUROPE



In 2024, FEPS reinforced its commitment to advancing towards a more social Europe at a time when the far-right movement and conservative forces are gaining power across Europe and the world. Despite this backlash on social rights and thanks to progressive leadership in national governments and European institutions, in particular Commissioner Nicolas Schmit, we could witness developments in social rights, marked by collaborative efforts to strengthen social protection and inclusion across the continent.

In January, under the Belgian presidency of the Council of the European Union, the conference 'Minimum Income, towards a safety net for all' convened in Brussels. This gathering allowed EU member states to assess progress on their minimum income systems, following the Council's recommendation to establish adequate minimum income schemes.

In April, FEPS actively shaped the High-Level Conference on the European Pillar of Social Rights, which took place in La Hulpe, Belgium. EU institutions, social partners, and civil society organisations renewed their commitment to a stronger social Europe by signing the La Hulpe Declaration. This declaration outlined plans to review and update the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan in 2025, aiming to achieve the 2030 targets for employment, skills, and poverty reduction. Key initiatives included promoting lifelong learning, combating discrimination through an intersectional approach, and enhancing social protection systems. Prior to the La Hulpe conference, FEPS published a policy study on the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights. In the following months, a video series was produced and disseminated to emphasise concrete steps that now need to be taken to ensure a progressive implementation of the pillar.

With millions of Europeans struggling to have access to decent accommodation, FEPS has been a pioneer in putting forward the importance of housing policy in the EU. A significant milestone was achieved by the appointment of the first-ever EU Commissioner for Housing, Dan Jørgensen, reflecting growing concerns over affordability and access to housing

across Europe. We have been very actively pushing and planting the seed for this improvement. Commissioner Jørgensen, entrusted with this portfolio, is tasked with addressing the housing crisis, supporting social housing initiatives and ensuring that EU policies prioritise affordable and sustainable living conditions for all citizens. The fact that he is also in charge of energy policy highlights the importance of the just transition in ensuring sustainable housing for all.

In addition, the newly appointed European Commission has among its members a new Executive Vice-President in charge of social rights and skills, quality jobs and preparedness, Roxana Minzatu. The focus on social rights was the result of important work by progressive political forces at a time when the question of employment, social protection and equal rights remains central.

These events underscore the need to fostering a fair and inclusive society, addressing challenges such as digital transformation, climate change and demographic shifts through collaborative and proactive social policies leaving no one behind.





## HIGHLIGHT 1 // CALL TO EUROPE – THE FUTURE IS SOCIAL! IN BRUSSELS, HUNGARY AND BEYOND

### EVENT



In the 2024 editions of FEPS' flagship conference 'Call to Europe', hosted in the framework of EU Council Presidencies of Belgium and Hungary, mainstreaming a strong social Europe in EU policy making was high on the agenda.

On 30 April, in Brussels, we collaborated with Eyes on Europe and the Brussels chapters of socialist and social democratic parties (PSOE, PD, SPD, PS, PvdA, PSD and Labour) to convene thought-provoking policy makers, academics, civil society and youth representatives for an afternoon of interactive workshops and talks and an evening with inspiring discussions among leading figures of social rights, including Nicolas Schmit, EU Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, Enrico Letta, former prime minister of Italy and author of the report *Much More than a Market – Speed, Security, Solidarity*,

and Sampedro Marcos, the Spanish state secretary for Europe.

In late October, in Budapest, we joined forces with SOLIDAR, the S&D Group in the European Parliament and Hungarian democratic and socialist foundations. With Hungarian representatives from political parties, academia, press and civil society, members of the European Parliament Birgit Sippel and Gaby Bischoff engaged in discussions on true democracy, accessible public services, sustainable infrastructure, universal welfare, quality housing and renewable energy.

For the first time, we also actively asked youth representatives for their vision and hopes for Europe's future. Among all participants, the call for a more equal, fair and open Europe became clear.



## HIGHLIGHT 2 // THE SOCIAL PILLAR AND THE FUTURE OF THE EU SOCIAL AGENDA

### POLICY STUDY AND VIDEO SERIES



Amid shifting economic governance, geopolitical instability, and the green and digital transitions, the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) is more critical than ever as a guiding framework for social policy. However, its emphasis and the implementation of its 20 principles are not guaranteed.

FEPS published a policy study assessing the EU's progress in advancing equal opportunities, improving working conditions and strengthening social protection. The study highlights the role of social partners and civil society in shaping policies through a 'Shadow Social Agenda' for the next legislature.

Through national case studies (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Poland, Portugal, Romania and

Spain), it analyses different political initiatives and obstacles faced by policymakers in attempting to make progress towards the action plan targets.

It also looks forward to the current legislature (2024-2029), with some reflection on the green deal-social pillar nexus, social investment and forward-looking funding tools. Key other areas of focus include education, employment, health and social protection.

A dedicated video series accompanies this study, offering more profound insights into these pressing social challenges and policy solutions.

## HIGHLIGHT 3 // HOUSING AS A HUMAN RIGHT

### EVENT



In early 2024, we also joined forces with the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Athens Office, InSocial, and Eteron to conduct a policy study *on Housing as investment in Greece and Southern Europe – Private profit versus social value* (published in 2025) with comparative insights from Italy and Portugal which are particularly affected by the growing touristification, financialisation and assetisation of the housing market.

In 2024, FEPS has been at the forefront of advocating for housing as a fundamental human right and a common good to promote affordable, adequate, and sustainable housing solutions both at the national and the European level.

FEPS thus endorsed the Declaration of Portimão from 5 April 2024 – an initiative by the PES Group in the European Committee of the Regions in which socialist local and regional leaders on housing strongly call for a European Plan for affordable housing to address the persisting and deepening housing crisis in Europe and ensure the right to housing for all.

In addition, we published the dossier *Housing is a human right* in the Progressive Post and, in the weeks after, held various interactive seminars, for example at the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB) on *Affordable housing and (in)equality in the European Union* or the *Capacity-building seminar on housing* at FEPS together with representatives from the S&D, PES, the PES Group at the European Committee of the Regions and other progressive stakeholders.

As part of this initiative, we hosted a first hybrid expert roundtable on 24 April in Athens, bringing together housing researchers and practitioners to exchange on housing market dynamics and public policies in Greece. In late November, the lead researcher Dimitra Siatitsa (National Technical University of Athens) and the contributing authors, Simone Tulumello (Universidade de Lisboa) and Laura Colini (Università Iuav di Venezia), presented the main results of the study to the public at the Eteron office. Engaged in the discussion were, among others, the member of the European Parliament Yannis Maniatis, the head of the Greek delegation to the S&D Group and Irene Tinagli, chair of the special committee on the housing crisis in the European Union.

Despite the EU's lack of direct competencies in housing policy, FEPS continues to advocate for the Union to improve its supporting competencies in the field. With activities and research outlined in this report, we contribute to reinforcing a strong coalition between politics, civil society, academia and the public around the notion of housing as a human right.



FEPS AT WORK: RESEARCH AND STUDIES

MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

GENDER EQUALITY



Ambition

In 2024, FEPS reinforced its commitment to advancing gender equality at a time when the backlash against women's rights intensified across Europe. Despite important milestones – notably the EU's adoption of the long-awaited directive on combating violence against women and the growing consensus on feminist foreign policy – the rise of authoritarian, right-wing forces continues to challenge the progress achieved. Against this backdrop, and in line with FEPS' mission to promote equality and social justice, our gender portfolio served as a platform for strategic reflection, coalition-building and transformative policy thinking at EU and national levels.

FEPS' ambition was to amplify progressive feminist voices and foster innovative ideas in **areas ranging from foreign policy to the future of work, from care and social rights to democratic participation**. This was a year of landmark initiatives, not least the publication of the book *A New Gender Equality Contract for Europe*, launched at the European Parliament. It was also a year of deeper engagement with allies across Europe, including civil society, political stakeholders and academic experts, to counteract anti-gender narratives and push for systemic change.



Results

An important highlight of the year was the publication of the **book *A New Gender Equality Contract for Europe*** in collaboration with Fondation Jean-Jaurès. The book presents a bold, forward-looking vision for gender equality rooted in progressive values, calling for a renewed political and social contract for gender equality in Europe. Its launch event at the European Parliament marked a pivotal moment, reinforcing the political relevance of feminist policymaking in the aftermath of the 2024 EU elections.

FEPS deepened its leadership in shaping a feminist approach to foreign policy through the **Feminist Foreign Policy Progressive Voices Collective (FFPPVC)**, co-led with the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES). A full calendar of activities included a policy brief series, three expert meetings and a high-level stakeholder dialogue in December. These efforts placed intersectional feminist perspectives at the heart of international policy debates and built momentum for a more values-based, people-centred EU external action.

On **economic justice**, FEPS continued its collaboration with the CEE Gender Network, releasing the policy study *Bridging the Gender Pay Gap in the Western Balkans?*, which sheds light on **persistent structural inequalities in labour markets** across the region. The study highlights the urgent need for gender-transformative measures in economic policymaking – from wage transparency and labour rights to care infrastructure and social dialogue. These themes also took centre stage at the high-level conference *Accelerating Progress – Towards a Feminist Future of Work*, co-organised in Barcelona with Fundació Campalans. The event brought together trade unionists, policymakers and feminist experts to examine how gender-based violence, care inequalities and precarious work continue to shape women's labour market experiences. Together,

these initiatives reinforced FEPS' commitment to placing gender equality at the heart of the social and economic agenda in Europe and its neighbourhood – **calling for a future of work that is not only green and digital but also fair, safe and feminist**.

As part of FEPS' longstanding commitment to **democracy and participation**, the study *Women CSO Leaders for Systemic Change* was published, shedding light on the experiences of feminist civil society actors and the transformative potential of their leadership. The accompanying launch event highlighted the **urgent need to better support feminist movements at the grassroots level**. FEPS also marked a significant moment with the 10th Barbara Prammer Symposium, held in Vienna with the Karl Renner Institute and SPÖ Frauen. This anniversary edition served as a powerful reminder of the **legacy of women's struggles in political life and the importance of intergenerational feminist dialogue**.

Gender, democracy, and authoritarianism intersected in new ways across Europe, prompting FEPS and the Tancsics Foundation to co-organise a conference and training on pursuing **gender equality in hostile political environments**. These initiatives gave progressive actors the tools to resist democratic backsliding and anti-gender rhetoric, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe. The annual Korčula School Think Tank's conference, named *Transforming politics through a gender lens*, once again created space for strategic exchanges between feminists in politics, trade unions and civil society, cementing its role as a flagship summer platform for progressive gender discourse in the region.

Through this multifaceted approach, 2024 has been a milestone year in FEPS's gender equality agenda – not only resisting the backlash but shaping a **progressive feminist future in Europe**.

Feminist Foreign Policy  
Policy brief series





## HIGHLIGHT 1 // A NEW GENDER EQUALITY CONTRACT FOR EUROPE

### BOOK AND LAUNCH EVENT

Co-edited by Andrea Petö, Laetitia Thissen and Amandine Clavaud, the book *A New Gender Equality Contract for Europe* marks a flagship contribution to the progressive feminist agenda. Published in partnership with Fondation Jean Jaurès and launched at the European Parliament, the book brings together leading experts and political voices to articulate a bold, forward-looking vision for gender equality across all dimensions of EU policymaking.

This comprehensive volume **addresses urgent challenges in care, democracy, culture, foreign policy, labour, SRHR and climate justice, and calls for a renewed social contract that places feminist values at the core of Europe's future.** The launch event drew wide attention, offering critical momentum ahead of the European Commission's new term.



## HIGHLIGHT 2 // A FEMINIST LEGACY AT THE FOREFRONT

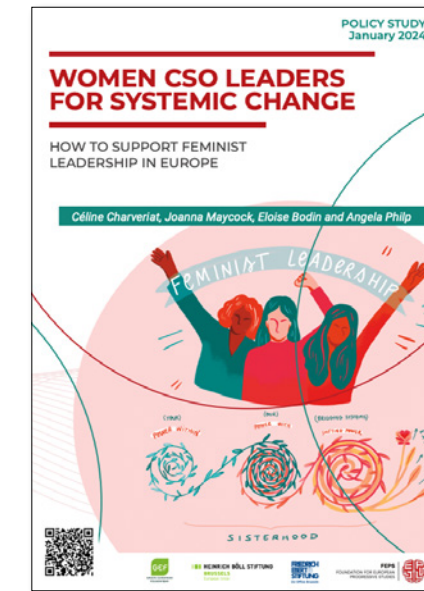
### EVENT

At the invitation of FEPS, outgoing EU Commissioner for Equality Helena Dalli delivered her legacy speech at a high-level event reflecting on the state of gender equality in Europe. This symbolic and strategic moment brought together progressive leaders and civil society representatives to take stock of the achievements of her mandate and to envision the path ahead.

Commissioner Dalli emphasised the role of feminist leadership in shaping a new European agenda rooted in rights and equality – a call to action that resonated deeply ahead of the next institutional cycle.



# POLICY CONTRIBUTIONS



**Women CSO leaders for systemic change: A deep dive into the contributions and needs of feminist civil society**

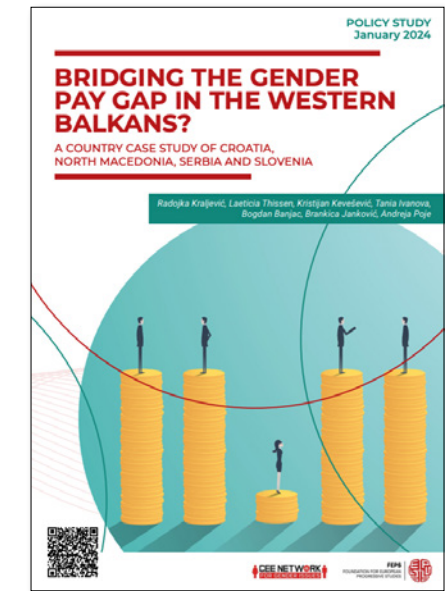
### POLICY STUDY

At a time when the world urgently needs bold, inclusive leadership, nearly one in two women leaders in civil society organisations (CSOs) across Europe show signs of pre-burnout. This is not a personal failure – it's a **structural crisis**.

This groundbreaking policy study is the first of its kind to map the systemic challenges and untapped potential of feminist leadership in the European CSO landscape. Based on 150 interviews, it reveals a troubling picture of **structural overwork, financial precarity, misogyny, and exhaustion** – but also highlights the transformative promise of **intersectional feminist leadership** as a model for systemic change.

This study, published by FEPS, the EU Office of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung European Union and the Green European Foundation, offers bold policy recommendations in four key areas: reimagining leadership cultures, centring care, addressing financial insecurity in the sector and investing in equality diversity, and inclusion.

This is a call to action: to support women CSO leaders not just to survive, but to thrive – and lead us all into a more just future.



**Bridging the gender pay gap in the Western Balkans?: A call to close structural inequalities in EU neighbourhoods**

### POLICY STUDY

Despite growing awareness and policy commitments, **women in the Western Balkans continue to face persistent gender-based wage inequalities.** The gender pay gap remains a key barrier to women's economic independence and a critical obstacle on the region's path toward EU accession.

This policy study offers a rare and in-depth **comparative analysis of six Western Balkan countries.** It uncovers the **underlying drivers of pay inequality**, such as occupational segregation, unequal care responsibilities, informality and limited access to justice for victims of discrimination.

Published by FEPS in partnership with the CEE Gender Network, the study outlines a concrete, forward-looking agenda to close the gender pay gap in the region. From strengthening labour rights and pay transparency to investing in public care services and gender-disaggregated data, the recommendations reflect a progressive roadmap for change.

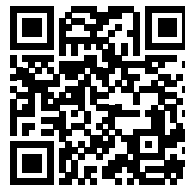
Achieving gender equality in the labour market is not only a matter of fairness – it is a prerequisite for inclusive, sustainable development in the Western Balkans.



# FEPS AT WORK: RESEARCH AND STUDIES

## MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

# MIGRATION



### Ambition

In 2024, after years of hard negotiations, the European Parliament and the Council finally agreed on the long-awaited comprehensive legislation on asylum and migration. Hence, one would assume that the years of confrontation on how to manage migration between the countries of first arrival and the countries of destination, and the never-ending debate about sharing responsibilities, would be over. In fact, the adoption of the **New Pact on Migration and Asylum**, in April 2024, closed a period of intense negotiations, but – obviously – it did not 'solve' migration per se. Nor did it end the toxic and aggressive discourse around migration. The topic was also central in the electoral campaigns ahead of the European elections and continued to be exploited by right and far-right forces for mere political gains.

After the adoption of the Pact, the EU member states were given two more years (until June 2026) to implement it.

It remains to be seen to what extent they will be able and willing to implement the new legislation or diverge from it, choosing rather autonomous paths.

Hence, for 2024, FEPS' ambition was to **look at the challenges that implementing the new complex legislative framework would pose for the member states**. Furthermore, we aimed to continue our investigation of the **relations between the Union and the African countries through migration**, looking also at the impact that the asylum reform may have on the countries of origin and transit, and **formulate alternative policy proposals** and recommendations for progressive forces in the field of migration management as well as in other policy areas that have an impact on migration causes and flows. The goal is to move to **a political approach that puts the migrant at the centre**.



### Results

In 2024, the **Progressive Migration Group (PMG)** – the African-European migration expert group established in cooperation with the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung – continued the work initiated in 2022. The title of this cycle analysis was **"A development-oriented and rights-based approach to migration"**. The members of the group identified three main areas of reflection: challenges and opportunities regarding legal pathways; African perspectives on EU migration and development policies and the impact of EU Asylum reform on African countries. These topics were discussed and analysed in the course of online and in-person meetings and were finally presented during a conference in Brussels, in September 2024.

The PMG formulated recommendations that would first and foremost reconcile European migration policies with the EU member states' demographic trends and need for labour migration, hence moving from an approach focused entirely on security and border control to one that upholds inclusiveness and equal social protections for migrants, and recognise the role played by newcomers in the hosting countries' economies and societies. The Progressive Migration

Group also focused on the need to incorporate migration into development policies, while not turning development aid into an instrument of migration management. The PMG advocates **a more holistic approach to development assistance** – one that extends beyond financial aid to tackle the political and social issues underlying insecurity, instability and displacement.

A series of policy studies, published in cooperation with the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and the European Policy Centre, focused on **key elements of the New Pacts and the challenges that their implementation would raise**. Namely, the studies tackled the Asylum and Migration Management Regulation (AMMR), the Asylum Procedures Regulation (APR), the Crisis and Force Majeure Regulation and the Screening Regulation. The aim of the research was to look at the ways the Pact should and will work to grasp its criticalities and analyse whether its implementation will help overcome the shortcomings of the previous migration management. The four studies also offer some proposals to ensure correct implementation and the protection of vulnerable applicants.



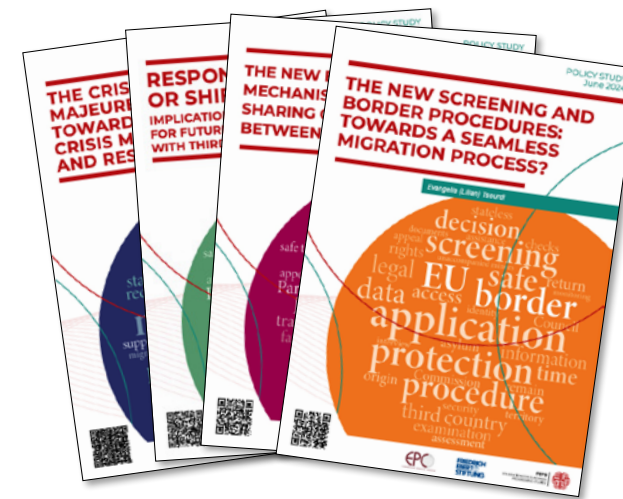
## HIGHLIGHT 1 // PUTTING AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES ON THE CENTRE STAGE OF EU MIGRATION POLICIES

### PROJECT AND EVENT

In the current global context, migration is once again at the top of the European and national political agenda. However, short-term, simplistic and narrow policy responses will fail to address existing challenges and exacerbate the consequences of mismanagement. Considering the significance of migration as a policy issue in the new European legislative term, the Progressive Migration Group discussed over the year the implications of the EU Asylum reform for African countries, the shortage of labour migration and legal pathways, and the African perspectives on the complex interplay between EU migration and development policy on the continent. The findings of the Progressive Migration Group's work were presented in Brussels on 10 September at an international conference organised in cooperation with the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung EU Office.



# POLICY CONTRIBUTIONS



### New Pact implementation policy studies series

### POLICY STUDY SERIES

This policy studies series – published in cooperation with the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and the European Policy Centre – examines different aspects of the New Pact, exploring the challenges that its implementation would pose for the EU member states and formulating recommendations for the European institutions and the member states.

The series is composed of four policy studies focusing on Asylum and Migration Management Regulation (AMMR), the Asylum Procedures Regulation (APR), the Crisis and Force Majeure Regulation and the Screening Regulation and on the impact that the Pact will have on relations between the EU and third countries: "The new screening and border procedures: towards a seamless migration process" by Lilian Tsourdi; "The crisis and force majeure regulation: towards future-proof crisis management and responses?" by Alberto-Horst Neidhardt; "Responsibility-sharing or shifting" by Eleonora Milazzo and Andreina De Leo and "The new European solidarity mechanism: towards a fair sharing of responsibility between member states?" by Philippe De Bruycker.

### Labour migration in the Western Balkans. Consequences for the region's democratic life

### POLICY BRIEF

Labour migration is a phenomenon that is rooted in the structural problems of Western Balkans societies, such as the high rate of youth unemployment, a poorly performing labour market and inadequate welfare systems. The phenomenon has severe repercussions not only on the quality of internal services, such as healthcare and highly qualified jobs, but also on the democratic stability of the analysed countries. This policy brief provides an overview of the causes and consequences of labour migration from the Western Balkans, concluding with recommendations for the region's national governments and for the European institutions on how to address the problem jointly. This policy brief was published in the Balkan Focus series.

## HIGHLIGHT 2 // IMPLEMENTING THE NEW PACT SOLIDARITY, FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND EFFECTIVENESS IN ASYLUM AND MIGRATION

### EVENT

With member states due to finalise their national implementation plans before the end of 2024, the conference "Implementing the New Pact" (Brussels, 11 November 2024) – organised by FEPS and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung EU Office in cooperation with the European Policy Centre and the Odysseus Network – explored the comprehensive changes introduced by the New Pact on Migration and Asylum and the ways to ensure their proper implementation over the coming years.

Legal experts, policymakers and civil society analysed and discussed challenges and ways to implement the New Pact and strengthen the Common European Asylum System. It also looked at ways to create a resilient asylum system that balances responsibility, solidarity, protects human rights and the rule of law.





# FEPS AT WORK: RESEARCH AND STUDIES

## MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

# EUROPE IN THE WORLD



FEPS remained at the forefront of shaping progressive responses to the pressing existential challenges posed by Russia's ongoing full-scale war on Ukraine and broader international instability. While it is becoming less likely that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will be reached, it is clear that global governance structures require urgent reform to address these interconnected challenges. In response, **FEPS has championed efforts for renewed multilateralism, advocating for a more cooperative and inclusive global order.**

Amidst these developments with far-reaching transnational impacts, FEPS has actively produced publications, organised public events and fostered

exchanges centred on key topics such as the reform of the multilateral forums, the social transformation of Ukraine and promoting dialogue with Africa and the US.

A central milestone in FEPS' global engagement was its participation in the **UN Summit of the Future in New York** and the **UN Civil Society Conference in Nairobi**. Both forums were instrumental in shaping the **Pact for the Future** – an agreement designed to reshape international cooperation and global governance. Thanks to its special consultative status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council, granted in 2019, FEPS was able to engage directly in the preparation process alongside global experts, member states and civil society.

On this occasion, FEPS presented **the book A new global deal: reforming world governance**, written by a group of high-level experts. This publication identifies critical reforms needed to build a fairer and more inclusive global order. Throughout this process, FEPS collaborated with several prominent partner organisations, including Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Renner Institute, Fondation Jean-Jaurès and the Olof Palme International Center, all of whom share a commitment to progressive and inclusive global governance.

In parallel, FEPS has been deeply involved in supporting the **social transformation of Ukraine**, particularly in the aftermath of the ongoing conflict with Russia. As Ukraine works toward reconstruction, FEPS has emphasised that progress must extend beyond military concerns to strengthen societal resilience. Through its initiatives, FEPS has actively promoted **inclusive and sustainable recovery efforts**, highlighting the need for progressive, inclusive policies to ensure that no one is left behind in the recovery process.

FEPS also maintained its longstanding commitment to global partnerships. **Africa Day 2024** marked another key moment of the year. The event remained the largest public event focused on Africa and international

cooperation in the Netherlands. This annual event, which gathered over 500 participants this year, offers a platform for African voices and sparks conversations among citizens, policymakers and NGOs about promoting human rights and fostering equitable cooperation between Africa and Europe.

Finally, the event State of the Unions assessed the **implications of the US presidential elections for transatlantic relations and global geopolitics**. The event provided a critical platform to analyse the election results, discussing their impact on US-EU relations, multilateralism and global challenges such as climate change, trade and economic recovery.

Across all these efforts, FEPS remains committed to advancing global priorities such as multilateral governance reform, the green transition, sustainable development and the ethical use of AI – aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the **Pact for the Future**. Central to this vision are the principles of human rights, gender equality and the core values of justice, equality and solidarity. Through this commitment, FEPS seeks to drive forward political, economic, social, technological and environmental progress toward a more just, resilient and cooperative global order.



## HIGHLIGHT 1 // A NEW GLOBAL DEAL

### BOOK

The pandemic, climate disasters, financial crises, food insecurity, poverty, digital transformation and wars are just a few of the complex global challenges that societies must face. Yet the world governance systems currently in place are not capable of dealing with such challenges.

Moreover, recent years have seen general backsliding and inequality in reaching the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by all member states of the United Nations in 2015 under their 2030 Agenda. World governance structures must be reformed if they are to cope with these global challenges and their complex interactions.

Against this background, the book **A new global deal: reforming world governance** aims to contribute to an open dialogue across all continents concerning the priorities of reforming world governance and policies to address current global challenges.

Based on contributions from renowned European progressive experts and policymakers, it makes proposals regarding the reform of the world governance system in crucial policy areas such as climate and environment, social issues, digital transformation, trade and supply chains and industrial policy. It also tackles the questions of how to reform the global financial architecture and the UN's institutions.

The book has been presented worldwide: at the UN Summit of the Future, which took place in New York, and at the Brazil G20 Summit, as well as in Austria, Belgium, Chile, China, Germany, Kenya, Nigeria, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland.





## HIGHLIGHT 2 // UN SUMMIT OF THE FUTURE IN NEW YORK

### OFFICIAL SIDE-EVENT AT THE UN SUMMIT OF THE FUTURE ACTION DAYS

IPEA—the Brazilian Institute of Applied Economic Research and a member of the organising committee of the T20 Brazil—and FEPS hosted an official side event during the Summit of the Future action days, which took place at the UN headquarters in New York on September 20, 2024.

The purpose of this event was to present the policy recommendations of the T20 Brazil communiqué to the G20 leaders that are relevant to the outcome of the Summit of the Future. (The T20 is a G20 engagement group that brings together think tanks and research centres from G20 members and guest countries and organisations. FEPS is part of this important network).

The event sessions addressed the following main thematic areas:

- Reaching the SDGs, with a special focus on decreasing poverty and inequalities as well as tackling climate change with strong financial means;

- Reforming global governance and multilateralism with a particular focus on reforming the financial architecture to address the debt problems and the need for a larger-scale investment.



## HIGHLIGHT 3 // THE SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION OF UKRAINE

### EVENT

The ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine has profoundly impacted the European peace and security architecture, reinforcing the need for a progressive approach that goes beyond military confrontation to strengthen societal resilience. As the war continues, it is essential to consider the long-term implications for Ukraine and the broader Europe, prioritising not only immediate military needs but also thinking about just and sustainable recovery, reaffirming European integration as a successful peace project. Social Democrats have a unique responsibility to advance a vision of peace that protects the social fabric of society, not just through defence policies. As a hub of innovation and reform, Ukraine has the potential to serve as a regulatory sandbox for Europe, offering a unique opportunity to rethink and reimagine Europe's future.

During this expert meeting, FEPS and its partners, FES (Ukraine), Amicus Europae (Poland), Karl Renner Institut (Austria), Kalevi Sorsa Foundation (Finland), Foundation Max van der Stoel (the Netherlands) and Fondation Jean Jaurès (France) brought together key stakeholders to discuss **Ukraine's social policy challenges, focusing on areas like housing, healthcare, education, and gender equality.**

Together, we explored how Social Democrats can support Ukraine in building a resilient and prosperous society that prioritises the well-being of all citizens. The meeting aimed to foster informed dialogue on Ukraine's future in Europe, particularly considering the increasingly volatile geopolitical reality.

The expert meeting was divided into three sessions:

- **From a country at war to sustainable peace:** making a case for a progressive Ukraine
- **On a path to EU membership:** addressing social policy challenges in Ukraine's reconstruction
- **Leaving no one behind:** advancing gender equality and inclusion in the reconstruction of Ukraine



## HIGHLIGHT 4 // AFRICA DAY 2024

### EVENT

For 26 years, Africa Day has been the largest event focused on Africa in the Netherlands. It is a day full of workshops, debates, lectures, literature, films, music, a fashion show and much more.

Organised by FEPS and the Foundation Max van der Stoel (FMS), this year's theme, 'Getting rights right', shifted the conversation on Africa from being talked about to being talked with, focusing on finding local solutions and listening to domestic voices on fighting for a just Africa.

At this year's edition, **FEPS hosted a series of fringe events on its own FEPS global stage!**

These sessions focused on:

- Seizing multilateral reform momentum for African countries
- Boosting the social impact of EU development cooperation in Africa through the inequality marker
- Addressing complexities and potential for workers' rights in global supply chains

- Social justice from an African trade union perspective
- Implementing Feminist Foreign Policy in fragile and conflict-affected setting



## HIGHLIGHT 5 // STATE OF THE UNIONS (US ELECTIONS)

### EVENT

Following the US presidential elections, the *State of the Unions* event, co-hosted by FEPS and the German Marshall Fund, provided a pivotal forum to analyse and debate the election outcomes. This year's event offered a timely opportunity to delve into the **evolving dynamics of US domestic politics and their ripple effects on the transatlantic relationship.** With leaders and experts from both sides of the Atlantic, we explored how the election results would shape policies and strategies, influencing not only US-EU relations but also the global geopolitical landscape.

The event was divided into two sessions. The first panel *A polarised democracy and the future of US politics* scrutinised the results of the US presidential and congressional elections, focusing on the internal political shifts and policy changes that would follow. The second one, *Transatlantic tides: the US elections results and their impact on EU-US relations and the global order* explored the broader implications of the US presidential and congressional election results on the transatlantic relationship and global stability.





# FEPS AT WORK: RESEARCH AND STUDIES

## MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

# POLITICAL EUROPE



### Ambition

Electoral, 2024 was an extraordinary year. It saw half of the world's population at the ballot boxes. One of the elections of 2024 was for the European Parliament's legislative period 2024-2029. Anticipating the dynamic of the campaign, as well as the potential political shifts and the indications that were visible in the diverse surveys, FEPS, in its framework activity programme 2024, focused on structuring the thematic field 'Political Europe' in a way that it could serve as a **guideline before and after June 2024**.

It was foretold that the political map in Europe and worldwide would change profoundly, paving the

way for the new era. It was anticipated that fragmentation and polarisation among the electorates, as well as radicalisation and an inclination to seek confrontation over compromise, made a new way of thinking about the European model necessary. It was beyond doubt that this model needs to be made more resilient by becoming more democratic and more efficient in its decision-making processes at the same time, which points **to an urgency for the next step in the institutional reform to be taken**. It was seen as essential and as indispensable to prepare for the European enlargement.

### Results



Amid the pre-electoral and post-electoral exchanges, as well as the subsequent European summits, it has become apparent that there was a growing interest in the institutional reform of the EU. The matter became, however, rather complex. Until recently, the divide remained between those seeking reform and the supporters of the status quo. In the new political reality, a third group appeared: Eurosceptical and outright anti-European forces that would like to use the momentum to shrink the EU's powers. To counteract those voices, FEPS and its partners continued to promote the collection 'Our European Future', edited by Maria João Rodrigues, which was published first in the context of the Conference on

the Future of Europe. Its main argument has only gained relevance since its first publication.

Much of the attention went to evaluating the campaign and the elections. On one hand, it pointed to the fact that the long overdue reform of the EU legislation regarding the functioning of the political parties (and political foundations), as well as the decision on potential change of the European electoral code, is negatively affecting stakeholders when it comes to space, means and role they could claim ahead of the EP elections. This has never been a self-centred and self-serving argument, but one that reflects the EU's need to make politics more participatory and more open to citizens from across the EU. The current deadlock prompted reflections on what could be done in the meantime, and this resulted in the project between FEPS and FES Brussels, with the support of Fondation Max van der Stoel (see below). On the other hand, it was clear that the 2024 elections were historical, not only because they were called so before they even took place, but because they triggered profound lessons to be drawn. FEPS remained a pioneer of these analyses, which can further be found in the European Progressive Observatory (see the paper by Ania Skrzypek, as well as commentaries on all 27 member states), the podcasts and the Progressive Post.

## HIGHLIGHT 1 // EU ELECTIONS 2024

### EUROPEAN PROGRESSIVE OBSERVATORY – SPECIAL EDITION ELECTIONS 2024

The European Parliament's elections of 2024 were important, having seen unprecedented shifts on the European political map. The carefully conducted analyses included in this special edition pointed to several important conclusions applicable to the pan-European level (such as the arithmetical changes in the allocation of seats in the EP, the growth of the right part of the spectrum and the decline in power of what used to be the EP's grand coalition), as well as to the tendencies observed in the member states (such as Europeanisation of the campaign, regional disparities between the electoral tendencies in Western and Eastern Europe). FEPS was the first think tank on the EU level to provide full, consolidated coverage of the elections (see paper by Ania Skrzypek *The European 'historical' elections 2024, dramatic moments and moderate outcomes*; as well as 27 commentaries).

These publications were followed by the Progressive Post Dossier, podcasts, and several media comments given by FEPS representatives.



## HIGHLIGHT 2 // FRIENDS OF THE WESTERN BALKANS

### PROJECT

In 2024, the Friends of the Western Balkans – the network established in 2022 by FEPS together with the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Dialogue Southeast Europe, Fondation Jean Jaurès, Fondation Max van der Stoel, Kalevi Sorsa Foundation, Olof Palme International Center, Renner Institute, Masarykova demokratická akademie and Progresiva – met in Pristina, Kosovo (21-23 March 2024), and Brussels (20-22 November 2024) to discuss the interplay between the European elections and the process of enlargement.

The two meetings brought together over 50 participants. MEPs, MPs (from the European Union member states or the Western Balkan regions), enlargement experts, think tankers and activists discussed social issues such as the region's brain drain and European-wide political developments that could potentially impact the Western Balkans and the enlargement process. In particular, the new balance of power within the European institutions was at the core of the exchange in the Brussels meeting.





# POLICY CONTRIBUTIONS



## Ahead of the 2029 European Elections – Note to ourselves

### POLICY STUDY

The road to the 2029 European Elections began the moment the last polls closed. In that spirit, FEPS and FES Brussels designed a project that builds on both organisations' strong credentials and unique profiles in terms of expertise in transnational party politics.

As a result, the project delivered the study *Ahead of the 2029 European Elections – Note to Ourselves* (by Ania Skrzypek and Kido Koenig), reflecting insights from roundtables involving scholars, politicians, youth and civil society (starting from the fringe event at the PES congress in Malaga in November 2023). These discussions focused on strengthening Europe's democratic fabric: transnational campaigns, the *Spitzenkandidaten* process, transparency in post-election negotiations and the potential of transnational lists. While reforms like

changes to the European electoral code are complex and may require treaty revisions, participants identified clear paths for progress in the meantime. Central themes included enhancing representation, transparency, and voter mobilisation.

The further materials include: the publication *The Great Countdown: A guide on how to arrive prepared for the European Elections 2029* (including papers by Anna Paczesniak, Julian Plottka, Domenec Ruiz Devesa, Wouter Wolfs and Alvaro Oleart), as well as an accompanying video series featuring the MEPs Gabriele Bischoff, Brando Benifei, Katarina Barley, Juan Fernando Lopez Aguilar and Andreas Schieder, exploring how Europe can innovate its democratic practices ahead of 2029.



## Beyond the border – The implications of Brexit for the island of Ireland

### PROJECT

In 2024, FEPS, TASC and FES London concluded a three-year research project focused on the impact of Brexit on the situation in Northern Ireland. The launch in Brussels in October 2024 featured a public event (organised together with Brussels Labour), as well as a set of closed-door meetings with MEPs and APAs, and colleagues from the UK mission to the EU and from the Northern Ireland Executive Office in Brussels. While the research provided many welcome insights to the important issues of the role of the EU as peace keeping and peace building actor, and to the profound importance of the post-Brexit agreements and their impact, it also reconfirmed FEPS' profile as a think tank that continued working on the EU-UK relations.

The project's policy contributions are furthermore mirrored in two publications. The first one by Sara Singleton is devoted to the issue of The impact of Brexit on Northern Ireland: a comprehensive policy overview, a pioneering study, written based on a literature review and original material gathered through interviews conducted

in Northern Ireland. It looks at the political, as well as socio-economic aspects and tries to answer several questions, such as: what type of concerns remain unsolved despite the Windsor Framework Agreement? But also what the impact will be when it comes to the loyalist and republican votes. Though power-sharing briefly resumed in 2024, the situation in Northern Ireland remained precarious. This study argued that the EU had a continued political responsibility to uphold peace and democratic governance in Northern Ireland.

The second paper by Patrick Diamond on The Windsor Framework and its implications – for Britain, Northern Ireland and the EU looked at how the new agreement would be (or not) a chance to open a new chapter, paving the way to cooperation. The diagnosis was that, despite the 2023 Windsor Framework's intentions, it failed to restore sustainable power-sharing, and hence, further deliberations will need to become a priority for the new EP and especially for its EU-UK delegation.



# FEPS AT WORK: RESEARCH AND STUDIES

## MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

# DEFENDING AND DEEPENING DEMOCRACY



### Ambition

In 2024, the Democracy portfolio operated within an increasingly hostile environment for liberal democracy, both in Europe and globally. According to V-Dem data released at the start of 2024, 71% of the world's population lived under autocratic regimes in 2023. Eastern Europe, in particular, has seen a stark democratic decline, reaching levels not observed since the immediate post-Cold War period. This erosion is driven by entrenched authoritarianism in countries such as Russia and Belarus, alongside notable democratic backsliding in Hungary, Serbia, and Poland (before the 2024 election). Crucially, this regression is not occurring in a vacuum. It is fueled by **a combination of systemic crises: economic insecurity, rising inequality and growing anxiety around the ecological transition**. These conditions are being actively exploited by nationalist and far-right forces across the continent.

Within the EU, democracy is increasingly being challenged from within. Far-right parties have made significant gains across several member states (for example, the AfD was polling second in Germany at the start of 2024). Democratic backsliding continued to be a serious concern in Hungary and Poland (prior to the 2023 Polish parliamentary election), while radical

right parties entered governing coalitions in countries such as Finland. At the EU level, **alliances between conservative and far-right forces have sought to block progressive legislation, including key components of the Green Deal**. Throughout early 2024, there was growing concern that the European elections would mark a turning point, with far-right parties expected to perform exceptionally well and potentially reshape the balance of power in the European Parliament.

This surge in authoritarianism is also rooted in long-term failures: declining trust in institutions and political parties' inability to respond to citizens' needs. To counter this, **progressives must push for bold democratic innovations** – from deliberative mechanisms to digital tools that foster engagement – while safeguarding election integrity and ethical standards.

To meet these challenges, the 2024 portfolio is structured around three strategic pillars: defending democracy, deepening democracy and addressing cross-cutting threats. It aimed to consolidate existing work, develop new expertise and encourage stronger collaboration, providing a robust framework to confront current threats and shape a progressive democratic future in Europe.

### Results

The first half of the year marked the culmination and publication of several key projects initiated in 2024. A major milestone was launching the policy study *How young people facing disadvantage view democracy in Europe*, which explores **how marginalised youth engage with democratic systems** across five countries. Published in January, the study was followed by a policy brief and a Hungarian case study. The project's results had notable uptake – where its

findings were used to inform a new federal youth law. This work strategically advanced the portfolio's pillar of deepening democracy by offering concrete insights into meaningfully involving disadvantaged young people in democratic life.

**Youth participation** remained a central theme throughout the year. FEPS organised a workshop as part of a major S&D-led youth event at the European Parliament,



training activists on how to design bold, hopeful counter-narratives to the divisive rhetoric of anti-democratic actors. This hands-on engagement underlined the active role that young people can and must play in defending and deepening democracy in Europe.

Delving into new work at the **intersection of youth and digital democracy**, we launched the policy study *From posts to polls*. Focusing on political communication strategies by political parties on social media during the 2024 European election campaigns, it revealed what does

– and does not – work in mobilising young voters online. The findings provide timely, practical recommendations for parties, policymakers and civil society actors alike.

Under the pillar of defending democracy, FEPS expanded its work on **the threats posed by far-right and anti-democratic forces**. Highlights included a widely attended fringe event at the PES Congress in Rome and the publication of FEPS policy study *The transformation of the European mainstream right and its impact on (social) democracy*.



## HIGHLIGHT 1 // THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE EUROPEAN MAINSTREAM RIGHT AND ITS IMPACT ON (SOCIAL) DEMOCRACY

### PROJECT

A major highlight was the launch of the FEPS policy study *The transformation of the European mainstream right and its impact on (social) democracy*. Coordinated by leading populism scholar Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser and developed with a network of scholars, the study explores whether centre-right parties in Western Europe are drifting toward far-right positions and how this affects liberal democracy. Using case studies from Austria, France, Germany, Spain, Sweden and Poland, it analyses the risks of normalising exclusionary rhetoric and the strategic implications for Social Democrats. The launch event in Brussels brought together MEPs and prominent academics, sparking high-level debate on defending democracy in a shifting political landscape. The project filled a critical gap in existing research and offered timely guidance for progressive actors across Europe.



## HIGHLIGHT 2 // A FREE AND DEMOCRATIC EUROPE: COUNTERING FAR-RIGHT POPULISM

### EVENT

On 19-20 March, the S&D Group hosted a vibrant youth gathering at the European Parliament in Brussels, uniting over 500 young Socialists and Social Democrats from across the EU. In partnership with FEPS, PES, the PES Group in the Committee of the Regions and YES, the event featured 12 hands-on workshops tackling the most pressing issues facing young Europeans today.

FEPS hosted the workshop *A free and democratic Europe: Countering far-right populism* at its headquarters – an urgent topic as far-right forces continue to gain ground. Young activists joined political, academic and civil society experts to design bold, hopeful counter-narratives. Their powerful message was delivered directly to S&D leaders during a European Parliament plenary session.

This workshop showcased FEPS's deepening focus on far-right analysis and democratic resilience, reinforced through new publications, media engagement and a packed fringe meeting at the 2024 PES Congress.



# POLICY CONTRIBUTIONS



### How young people facing disadvantage view democracy in Europe

#### POLICY STUDY

This policy study investigates how young people from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds engage with democracy in Ireland, Poland and Spain, with additional insights from France and Hungary. Based on in-depth qualitative research with over 100 young people and 50 experts, it challenges prevailing myths about youth disengagement. The findings show that while many young people feel alienated from formal democratic processes, they remain committed to democratic values and are eager to participate – particularly when politics delivers tangible local change. The study offers clear and actionable recommendations to make democratic systems more inclusive and responsive, providing important insights for EU and national-level policymaking.

The Spanish case study, in particular, sparked significant national interest in 2024, as the country debated a new federal youth law. The authors were invited to present their findings before the Spanish congress and participated in nationwide public events. Their input has become a reference point in developing more inclusive youth policy in Spain.



### From posts to polls

#### POLICY STUDY AND POLICY BRIEF

The policy study *From posts to polls* examines how political parties used Facebook and Instagram to engage young voters ahead of the 2024 European Parliament elections, focusing on Germany, Hungary, Sweden and Poland. It combines social media analysis with youth survey data to understand what motivated or discouraged young people from voting. The study reveals that while social democrats and Greens addressed youth issues most frequently, their content often lacked clarity, resonance and strategic targeting. In contrast, far-right parties achieved significantly higher engagement by using emotionally charged, negative messaging, amplified by platform algorithms.

The study identifies a clear opportunity: **social democratic parties remain among the most liked by young people, but must adopt smarter, more segmented communication strategies**. It also calls for long-term digital policy reform, including algorithmic regulation and incentives for constructive discourse. These findings are crucial for policymakers, party strategists and civil society aiming to counter extremist narratives and strengthen youth engagement in European democracy.



# FEPS AT WORK: RESEARCH AND STUDIES

## MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

# NEXT LEFT



### Ambition

2024 was anticipated as a super electoral year, and hence a test for many Social Democratic parties. With the electorate's changing voting behaviour (volatility, fragmentation of opposing groups and radicalisation), the political landscape is undergoing a profound transformation, opening a set of historical questions for Progressives.

On one hand, in an era that prompts more confrontational than consensus-building-driven politics, Progressives have to be sure to offer an ideologically distinctive project that can unite beyond the divisive topics. This is of strategic importance, as from election to election, the right keeps growing, while the left further splits. On the other hand, **Progressives need to address the programmatic challenge of how to offer an empowering project in an era of increased citizens' anxieties** (regarding geopolitical shifts, subsequent crises and ongoing digital and ecological

transformations). This has been a complex issue of balancing the need to offer a sense of security and not falling into a trap of appearing minimalist or conservative. And to do so, knowing that Social Democrats have often been considered a historical party, which was a target of growing distrust and disenchantment in politics and political elites.

With these challenges came also the need to answer more **tactical questions** – namely, how to organise the movement so that it is open, inclusive and adaptable to citizens' expectations. Communication is equally important, so that, against the background of a co-existence of social and traditional media, the outreach is oriented away from broadcasting towards conversations able to embody the ideals of deliberative democracy, and hereby providing a shield and boosting citizens' resilience against the radical right's spin doctors.



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### Results

The thematic field Social Democracy has undergone an important revision to more adequately address the challenges previously enumerated, as well as to further expand, becoming a shared, pan-European space of deliberation and exchanges concerning the state of progressivism in Europe and beyond. The core of the thematic field remained the Next Left Research Programme, which entered into its 15th year and continues to be run by FEPS together with the Karl Renner Institute, and chaired by MEP Andreas Schieder. As an initiative, it has become the longest existing and most prolific one. It has turned into a universe of its own, where politicians, scholars, analysts, pollsters, experts, youth, NGOs and trade unions representatives gather to contribute and cooperate. The most prominent feature of the Next Left remained the Focus Group, which in 2024 worked on the question progressive values and their translation into the contemporary politics (to be featured in the collective publication of the Next Left book series – vol. 16).

Furthermore, the programme continued to feature Next Left Lectures (offered by high-level scholars to the MEPs and sister organisations in the EP, having featured professors Simon Hix and Jenny Andersson, respectively hosted by MEPs Laura Baillarin and Sofie Eriksson); high level conversations (with senior academics from across

the globe), as well as Next Left Country Case Studies (each of which has been devoted to the analyses of Social Democracy in a chosen country, and outcomes of which have been available in a booklet format as well as a talk by the authors with other members of the Next Left community). In 2024, there were two further editions: the Analytical Conference that gave birth to the Next Left Progressive Pollsters Network, and the Next Left Progressive Historians Network.

The Oxford Symposium (celebrating also a jubilee edition) remained the flagship event (see below). At the same time, there have been further efforts to cooperate on specific, selected items of the Renewal of Social Democracy with members. A first example was the continuation of the project with FES Warschau, which saw the publication of the final report of Social democracy with(out) people – possible strategies for survival and expansion of the Polish Left, as well as a set of eight regional training sessions completed in cooperation with the Osrodek Myśli Społecznej Ferdynanda Lasalle'a in Wrocław. The second pertains to a project on Defeats and returns of social democratic parties, realised in cooperation with Masaryková Demokratická Akademie and FES Prague (and featuring five country case studies).

### HIGHLIGHT 1 // OXFORD SYMPOSIUM (10<sup>TH</sup> EDITION)

#### EVENT

From 15-17 December 2024, the 10th Oxford Symposium brought together over a hundred leading academics, politicians and policy experts from across Europe to St. Catherine's College. Co-organised by FEPS, Progressive Britain, and the Karl Renner Institut, this flagship event celebrated a decade of progressive dialogue and became a 'summit' for Progressives.

The Symposium opened with a public event devoted to the new era of the EU-UK relationship, featuring ministers and MEPs. It was followed by a special dinner with a keynote speech by Wes Streeting.

The intense programme, featuring six segments consisting of keynote speeches and panels, was framed in reference to the new book *The Politics of Polycrisis*, edited by Patrick Diamond and Ania Skrzypek. The publication departed from the need for more empowered and future-oriented progressive politics, delivered with more self-confidence and more foresight about the long-term challenges. It featured contributions by scholars, MEPs, and the European Commissioner for Energy and Housing.

The topics discussed looked at the state of Social Democracy (especially after the super electoral year and amid diverse renewal processes), the notion of delivering social progress and quality employment for all; the resilience and reform of the welfare state; defence and peace keeping missions; as well as democracy and new developments.

The event was evaluated as a great success and will therefore see a new large-scale edition in 2025.





## HIGHLIGHT 2 // NEXT LEFT FOCUS GROUP MEETING IN MADRID AND VIENNA

### EVENTS

The Next Left Focus Group, the core of Next Left, by FEPS and the Karl Renner Institute, continues to be a space of deep research, peer reviews and serves as a laboratory for new ideas. To use it to its full potential, it was decided to seek a bridge between closed-door sessions and meetings with Progressives across Europe in either closed-door or public formats. Following the successful experiences from Lisbon and Warsaw in 2023, the new cycle in 2024 began with a two-day event at the PSOE headquarters in Madrid – made possible thanks to the support of the Pablo Iglesias Foundation and the international secretariat headed by MEP Hana Jalloul. The programme offered an opportunity to exchange with members of the PSOE leadership, as well as MPs and local councillors. It also included a panel on *Governing social progress in times of triple transition*, at which FEPS was represented by Lina Galvez Munoz (FEPS VP and chair of the Scientific Council), Ivana Bartoletti (in her capacity as author of the FEPS Primer *A Digital Union based on European values*), Maria Maltschnig (FEPS VP and director of KRI) and Ania Skrzypek (FEPS Director for Research and Training), as well as Ainara Bascuñana (FEPS Head of Communication), Celine Guedes (FEPS Project Officer in charge of the Next Left projects) and Elena Gil (FEPS Coordinator for project and training).

The second in-person meeting of the Focus Group of that type took place in Vienna in December 2024, featuring a set of joint sessions between the Focus Group and the Progressive Pollsters Network. It was an occasion for a public debate on the European progressive strategy for growth, competitiveness and progress (featuring, among others Maria Maltschnig, FEPS Secretary General László Andor, MEP Andreas Schieder and Lorenza Antonoucci as Next Left FG member). The Group met with SPÖ officials, including MP Eva-Maria Holzleitner, and included a tour and a talk inside the Austrian Parliament.



## HIGHLIGHT 3 // NEXT LEFT ANALYTICAL CONFERENCE

### EVENTS

The Analytical Conference *Ahead and Beyond the Elections: Major European Political and Social Trends in 2024* was a new addition to the Next Left Research Programme, offering a space for presentations and debates between pollsters and data analysts on the one hand, and for politicians on the other. The objective was triple-folded. First, to boost the analytical aspects of the conversations about the future of social Democracy and connect with experts, who see the performance and the potential through the prism of numbers. Secondly, to create a space for much-needed conversation about growing societal divides and the upcoming significant social issues. This was a contribution to elevate the political discussions from the entrapment of short-termism and the limitations of looking at the fragmentation of politics only. Thirdly, and finally, it offered a stage for those who analyse the trends and wish to share their observations, while searching for ways to contextualise

the findings and make them available for a larger audience. The event in April was so enthusiastically welcomed that the initiative will continue, laying the groundwork for the **Next Left Progressive Pollsters Network** (which met online after the European elections and in person in December in Vienna).



# POLICY CONTRIBUTIONS



## The politics of polycrisis

### BOOK

The book *Politics of polycrisis* brings together leading voices from the EU and UK to explore how Social Democracy can be renewed in an era of climate crisis, economic insecurity, platform work, AI and rising inequality. Edited by Patrick Diamond and Ania Skrzypek, the book offers bold, forward-looking strategies for the centre-left.

Contributors include policymakers, academics, a European Commissioner and MEPs tackling key issues including employment precarity, green transition, industrial policy and the role of the state in technological change. Their collective aim: to help Social Democrats regain power by advancing inclusive prosperity while safeguarding security and democratic values.

Launched at the 10th Oxford Symposium in December 2024, the book reflects a decade of thought leadership at a time of profound transformation. **It offers a critical diagnosis of today's polycrisis and a hopeful roadmap for progressive renewal.**



## Next Left volume 15 Progressive ambition: How to shape Europe

### BOOK

**Progressive ambition: How to shape Europe in the next decade** is the 15th volume of the Next Left series, a long-standing platform for reimagining social democracy. Featuring contributions from leading scholars across Europe, and introduced by MEP Andreas Schieder, the book charts a bold path for the centre-left.

Divided into three chapters, it explores how progressives can govern with purpose in turbulent times – drawing lessons from global innovations like Bidenomics, addressing fiscal challenges and strengthening democratic representation.

The second chapter focuses on building a resilient EU agenda through social progress, workplace democracy and managing transformative change. The final section tackles coalition-building in a shifting political landscape, outlining strategies to counter the far right and reconnect with voters.

Launched in a moment of profound change, this volume offers essential ideas for shaping a more just, democratic and forward-looking Europe.

### Reviews praise the book as:

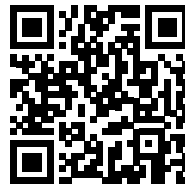
- "A crucial guide for navigating today's crises – from climate change to democracy's erosion". – MEP João Albuquerque
- "Bold ideas for a just transition and renewed EU strategy". – MEP Matthias Ecke
- "A 360-degree reflection on progressive challenges and opportunities". – Amandine Crespy
- "Fresh thinking for Europe's progressive future". – Jane Gingrich

This timely collection is a call to action for Progressives across Europe.



# FEPS AT WORK: TRAINING

## TRAINING



### Ambition

After adopting the training strategy, FEPS has been working with the partners to implement its diverse aspects while simultaneously trying to review and accelerate the existing initiatives. The three pillars of the strategy, focused respectively on **sharing knowledge; boosting skills; and expanding outreach** (especially in cooperation with the FEPS member organisations) are complementary to one another, with attention paid to the fact that increasing FEPS' (and partners') capacity within one pillar should also be translated to the benefit of the other two. An example of that was the ambition to establish a pan-European training of trainers, which would on one hand become a community of progressive trainers and facilitators, able to mutually help each other in increasing skills and gaining new training experiences; and on the other a team that FEPS (and partners) could rely on when providing activities within the third pillar. This was a step to ensure the same high quality and quality control across all the educational activities that FEPS leads.

Furthermore, much consideration has been given to building on existing projects and offering them a revamp, should such a makeover enable their expansion. An example of that was the **Open Progressive University (OPU)**, which concluded its first pilot phase with a thorough evaluation of the alumni of the first year.

Therefore, as FEPS was consolidating in its role as a political foundation with the capacity and ability to provide diverse training, **members also grew interested in working together in non-formal and informal learning**. This resulted in a vastly increasing volume of projects that were submitted for potential partnerships. To respond to enthusiasm and clear need within the movement and in the context of demand for more civic education for democracy, whilst not overstretching FEPS' own capacity to partner, FEPS decided to look into the new phase, laying the foundations for the future FEPS training programme.



### Results

With the mission to consolidate, accelerate and complete the implementation of the FEPS training strategy, an impressive number of new milestones were reached. Within the first pillar, focused on disseminating knowledge, FEPS focused on the promotion of the collection of the **Primers**, which, particularly in 2024, served the organisation's statutory goal of contributing to elevating the quality of the public debate about the future of Europe, as well as bridging the gap. To open up, two books were launched in an open space of a bookshop in Brussels. Furthermore, there was a call and recruitment of 35 promising young scholars from across the EU universities, who joined the ninth cycle of the **FEPS Young Academics Network (FEPS YAN)** – a project run since 2009 in cooperation with the Karl Renner Institut. They subsequently formed eight working groups that will deliver policy studies in the period of two years. Last but not least, FEPS also coordinated so-called **capacity building seminars**, which were co-organised with the S&D Group in the European Parliament, PES, PES CoR, PES Women, Workers' Group at the EESC, YES, EPSO and Solidar. These seminars saw two trainings (in May and December respectively), bringing each 40 representatives of diverse sister organisations to learn about European policy priorities for housing and the digital union.

The second pillar, which focuses on skills, saw the development of a new community – **a pool of trainers**. It was founded through three trainings and geared with

the support of Karl Renner Institut and Foundation Max van der Stoep (FMS), ensuring the exchange of the best practices as well as an added value of a pan-European cooperation on the creation of such a network (for more: see below). The training of trainers (ToT) came with an additional set of outputs, the 'manuals' offering FEPS members access to seminars' methodologies and their facilitation.

Finally, the third pillar – focused on outreach saw a significant expansion and multiplication of the projects that would be run accordingly to the FEPS blueprint of the **'national academies'**. A proud example of that is the Europapolitische Akademie organised with Karl Renner Institut, which was run in four modules and completed with a visit to Brussels. The topics included: the European Green Deal, the European Pillar of Social Rights, the threats from the far right and the future of the European democracy. New initiatives, conducted according to a similar scheme, included the Equality Academy in Hungary with Policy Solutions, covering green transition, mental health and progressive economy. Therefore, FEPS also contributed two trainings to the **YES summer camp**, addressing fighting the far right and disinformation.

Amid all these, FEPS also started preparations for a new module of OPU (that was to be launched in 2025) and devoted much energy to laying the foundations for what is to become a training programme in the future.





## HIGHLIGHT 1 // FEPS YOUNG ACADEMICS NETWORK – 9<sup>TH</sup> CYCLE

The FEPS Young Academics Network (FEPS YAN) is one of FEPS' flagship initiatives, established in 2009 in cooperation with the Karl Renner Institut. It offers a hub for the most promising, progressive PhD candidates and post-doctoral researchers from all over Europe. In 2024, FEPS YAN launched its ninth cycle. Following a call that attracted around 50 applications, 35 young progressive scholars with diverse academic backgrounds were selected through individual interviews conducted in March and April.

The new cycle officially began with an online seminar in June, during which the selected participants presented their individual research abstracts. The first in-person seminar took place in Vienna, marking the cycle's official launch. MEP Andreas Schieder, chair of the Next Left Programme, opened the seminar and engaged the scholars in a debate on the progressive priorities for the new term of the European Parliament, as well as key global challenges ahead.

During the seminar, two more lectures were offered (by Laszlo Andor, FEPS Secretary General and Ania Skrzypek, FEPS Director for Research and Training), as well as an introductory talk (by Maria Maltschnig, Director of Karl Renner Institut) and a getting-to-know-each-other workshop (by Elena Gil, FEPS Coordinator for Project and Training, and Angelika Stredinger, Head of Research and Politics at KRI). Then, eight working

groups were established, addressing the following themes: disinformation; fighting the far right; industrial policy and labour; industrial policy and cohesion; care economy; rule of law; sustainable housing and housing justice. Each group was paired with an academic and a political mentor (S&D MEPs Mathias Ecke, Juan Fernando López Aguilar, Irene Tinagli, Alex Agius Saliba, Andras Schieder, Idioia Mendía, René Repassi and Mohammed Chahim), fostering a fruitful academic mentorship and policy relevance cooperation.

In the autumn of 2024, members reconnected twice to discuss the progress of their policy papers and to participate in an online lecture on the EU budget with European Parliament Vice President Victor Negrescu and to take part in a training session on providing constructive feedback, with a particular focus on collaborative work within their groups.



## HIGHLIGHT 2 // TRAINING OF TRAINERS

In 2024, FEPS continued implementing its training strategy with the successful launch of the training of trainers programme, organised in cooperation with FMS and the Karl Renner Institut. This initiative responds to one of the final milestones outlined in the strategy, aiming to ensure the quality and coherence of FEPS training activities.

Building on the well-established FMS training methodology, the programme was adapted to the FEPS context with the ambition to develop a FEPS pool of trainers. This pool will not only guarantee quality and methodological consistency but will also enhance the impact of FEPS' growing number of educational initiatives.

Three training sessions were held in 2024: in May in La Hulpe (Belgium), in July in Vienna (Austria) and in November in Tallinn (Estonia, upon the invitation of Eduard Odinet, MP). During these sessions, around

50 trainers were trained and officially became part of the FEPS pool of trainers.

As a key outcome, FEPS also launched the first two volumes of its training toolkit: *the Training for trainers manual* and the *Manual to counter gender domination techniques*. The trainers' expertise and future activities will further enrich these resources.



## HIGHLIGHT 3 // PRIMERS ON DIGITAL AND CLIMATE

In 2024, FEPS published two new additions to its primer series, aimed at making complex policy areas accessible and providing progressive insights into EU-level policymaking: *A Digital Union Based on European Values* by Ivana Bartoletti and *Climate Progress in the EU and the World* by Stephen Minas.

Ivana Bartoletti's primer offers an in-depth look at how digital policy has been shaped in the EU, highlighting key tools, actors and the evolving legislative framework. It sets out three objectives: to build a shared understanding of Europe's digital ecosystem, to assess the EU's efforts toward technological sovereignty, and to confront the challenge of Europe's digital lag. The primer was launched in Librebook (Brussels) in October 2024 and presented in targeted meetings with MEPs Brando Benifei, Matthias Ecke and Laura Ballarín.

Stephen Minas' primer focuses on the foundations and future of EU climate action. It explains the significance of climate politics, the international framework and the internal EU legislative tools. It also proposes progressive principles for more ambitious and effective climate policy. The publication was launched in Librebook (Brussels) in November 2024.

Together, these primers contribute to FEPS' educational mission to make policy more accessible and forward-looking and to help new audiences enter specific thematic fields.





## FEPS AT WORK: OUTREACH

# THE PROGRESSIVE POST

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 and international issues while at the same time showcasing the broad analytical work done by and within FEPS. The magazine regularly features special coverage, a focus, dossiers, interviews, book and movie reviews. It is published three times per year. In 2024, (issues #21, #22 and #23), the magazine tackled, as usual, political, social, economic and foreign policy questions. In particular, the topics addressed in the course of the year were: the result of the European elections; the European social pillar; housing; the impact of the digital transformation on democratic processes; the reform of the single market; the outcome of the US presidential elections and the consequences for Europe of Trump's return to the White House; the attack of the far right to national social policies.

- **Issue #24** Spring edition  
**The future is social**

- **Issue #25** Summer edition  
**EU 2024: the unpredictable well-known**

- **Issue #26** Autumn/Winter edition  
**Brace for impact**



### Progressive Page

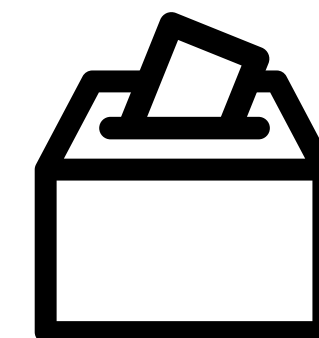
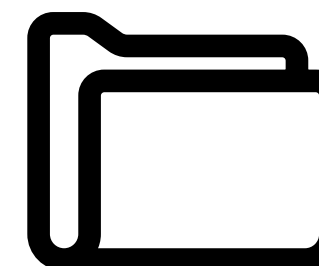
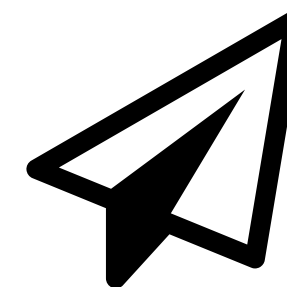
The Progressive Page is a short opinion page (about 1.000 words) published on the Progressive Post web-page and disseminated by a dedicated newsletter. It is written alternatively by FEPS authors (President, Secretary General and directors) and outstanding guest authors (renowned policymakers, academics and experts). In 2024, the Progressive Page was authored by members of the European Parliament, such as Christophe Clergeau, Matthias Ecke, Isilda Gomes, Hana Jalloul, Nicola Zingaretti and personalities such as Thomas Dermine, Enrico Letta, Anita Sowińska, Frank Vandenbroucke. In 2024, we published 22 Progressive Pages, tackling a wide range of issues, such as the new balance of power within the European Parliament; the Israeli-Palestinian crisis; the Summit of the Future in New York; the single market; the European Political Community.

### Dossier

The Progressive Post Dossiers comprise a set of three to four articles dedicated to exploring a key topic within progressive politics or policy. These dossiers seek to offer deeper analyses of political developments, European policies, international trends and challenges, drawing on diverse perspectives from experts, think tanks and policymakers. Rather than being comprehensive, their purpose is to provide intellectual stimulation and encourage discussion on current issues. In 2024, the Progressive Post published nine dossiers, ranging from the art of progressive politics to the demographic transition and the demolition of the welfare states by the far right as well as Europe's fight against corruption.

### European Progressive Observatory

The European Progressive Observatory (EPO) aims to cover elections in Europe and key elections elsewhere. In 2024, EPO has offered its readers a sharp and timely analysis of elections in the European Union (June), Austria, Belgium, Croatia, France, Ireland, Lithuania, Portugal, as well as the United Kingdom and the presidential elections in the United States. EPO articles are published on the Progressive Post website and disseminated via a dedicated newsletter.





# FEPS AT WORK: OUTREACH

## COMMUNICATION

The 2024 EU elections, and the start of a new term and new political priorities, significantly shaped FEPS' communication efforts and the overarching strategy. It directed our priorities and emphasised specific key topics. The wave of new members of the European Parliament and other policymakers arriving in the EU capital also represented a new opportunity for FEPS to widen its network.

Alongside changes in the electoral landscape, the sphere of digital communications also created new obstacles and opportunities in communicating FEPS' work, including pursuing more short-form video content and moving to Bluesky.

FEPS Communications has undergone a remarkable transformation in recent years. This evolution is evident across all our platforms, from the enhancement of our primary communication tool - the FEPS website - to the modernisation of our newsletters, the continuous refinement of our visual identity and the expansion of our social media presence.

FEPS has continued implementing the Communication Strategy - adopted by the General Assembly in June 2020 - as it remains a valid compass for enhancing visual identity, reinforcing branding, introducing innovative and engaging communication tools, and expanding outreach and impact.

### Social media

FEPS has significantly expanded its outreach across all social media platforms, including *LinkedIn*, *Twitter*, *Facebook*, *Instagram* and *YouTube*. Among EU political foundations, FEPS experienced the highest growth across all social networks from 2023 to 2024.

The numbers are on FEPS' side, reflecting the big effort our team invests in social media, our readiness to respond to algorithmic trends and our nonstop improvements in both format and content to reach larger and diverse audiences. This makes FEPS' content more accessible and better connected with the EU and global context and calendar. The numbers are also coherent with market trends, as the increase in followers in our different social networks is consistent with the change in public behaviour on social media.

In addition, unlike many other organisations, we are present on almost all social media, and this increase has been obtained without investing any money. In other words, all our content is organic as we cannot boost our promotion through money due to the regulations political foundations are subjected to.

*LinkedIn*, in particular, saw a phenomenal growth rate of more than 350% increase in the last three years and almost 170% in the last two years. Among EU political

foundations, in 2024, FEPS experienced the best new follower metrics and best engagement on *LinkedIn*. This reflects the investment in this platform; our content and followers' profiles are well-suited for it. We have recently started using *LinkedIn*'s special tools and features, such as the newsletter function to distribute our Progressive Post newsletters, *LinkedIn Events* to promote FEPS' events ex-ante and strengthen our targeting capacity, and live streaming, which we plan to develop further in the coming year.

Our following on *Instagram* and *YouTube* doubled, further strengthening our digital reach. Producing more short and direct videos with the highlights of FEPS' events, podcasts, and other activities is now part of the FEPS' Communications team's regular work, particularly through *YouTube Shorts* and *Instagram Reels*.






It is important to note that our content not only reaches our followers as posts now appear in the feed even when you don't follow a specific account. As a result of this, producing short-form videos is now a crucial means of capturing the attention of followers and non-followers.

On *Twitter*, even though thousands of followers left the social network when Elon Musk took over, we have

seen an 11% increase as a result of our meticulous planning, continuous work on live posting and increased use of high-quality visual material.

In coherence with the market trend, *Facebook* stagnated in following growth since 2022. However, there is still a core audience that we must maintain engagement with, especially in specific EU countries.

Improved strategy and planning have helped us to balance the spread of our posts better and enhance our social presence, considering the volume and diversity of content that FEPS must promote digitally. By tailoring our content to fit each platform's specific needs, tone and format, we effectively engaged diverse audiences with the content produced by the numerous activities in which FEPS is involved.

PLATFORM	FOLLOWERS GROWTH %	2024	2023	2022
 LinkedIn	+173%	9.113	3.340	1.632
 Instagram	+88%	2.562	1.363	804
 Youtube	+75%	1.050	601	478
 X	+7%	15.595	14.5000	13.600
 Facebook	+2%	17.347	17.000	16.769

### Audiovisual

As discussed, FEPS is constantly evolving and improving its audiovisual capacities to adapt to an increasingly video-oriented environment, reflecting the shift of social media language towards short video-based content. This means more short highlights videos, but also innovations and new features such as subtitles to make content more accessible.

In recent years, FEPS has moved into in-house audiovisual production to gain control of our content and make it sustainable in the long run. In 2024, several additions were made to FEPS AV equipment, such as small equipment for social media videos and new professional streaming cameras for events and the podcast.

A systematic approach to event coverage is now well-established, and all public events are recorded by default. This allows FEPS to expand both our ex-post communication and audience by making the content easily accessible for those who could not attend. Hybrid events are strategically done based on the location of speakers and target audience as part of a larger event strategy. *YouTube* has become not only a live-streaming platform but also a well-organised and appealing audiovisual archive.

In-house live-streaming by FEPS has experienced significant changes in 2024. FEPS has moved from the traditional webinar in *Zoom* mirrored on *YouTube* to a professional layout live-streamed on all social media platforms via *StreamYard*. This, in addition to the multi-camera livestream system introduced in previous years, creates the conditions for a large audiovisual production that is also combined with other materials such as video interviews, book teasers, trailers, event summaries and more.





## FEPS Podcast

FEPS Talks are 20-25 minute podcasts featuring dialogue between members of the FEPS team and prominent progressive policymakers, academics, and civil society members. The podcast underwent an **important revamp in 2024**, enhancing every aspect, from recording to branding and promotion.

Podcasts are now **recorded at the FEPS office, ensuring high-quality sound** and, as an exciting new feature, **video recording**. One of FEPS' office rooms has been reformed to become a video studio with all the necessary equipment and visual elements to create an

adequate space for podcasting. In addition to being available on *Spotify*, *Apple Podcasts*, and on our website, episodes are now also accessible on *YouTube* in video format.

In 2024, we recorded 18 podcasts featuring distinguished guests, including Spanish Minister Teresa Ribera; Professors Marguerite Mendell, Björn Hacker, and Catherine Barnard; ETUC General Secretary Esther Lynch; feminist campaigner Joanna Maycock; and MEPs Agnes Jongerius, Matthias Ecke and Sabrina Repp, among others.



## Strategising & planning

Communication is now an integral part of FEPS' work, and there is an organic link between what is being researched, debated and organised on one hand, and what is being disseminated and communicated about on the other. **Ambitious strategising and consistent planning on communications ensure a robust performance.** FEPS Communication Team continues working on:

- **A holistic approach to FEPS's work** which calls for the communications dimension to be included at an early stage of the project's development.
- **Long, mid and short-term communications plans** with clear priorities for all the different FEPS communications' tools.
- Predictability and synergies, which are key to **maximising the lifespan and cross-promotion** opportunities of FEPS materials.

- Ability to respond to unforeseeable relevant developments, which is key for a political foundation, especially in the year of the European elections. Together with the constant attention that the communication team has on current affairs, **quick reactions and prompt communication have been further reinforced**, facilitated by the participation of the entire team.

2024, in addition to focusing on communicating about FEPS' specific activities, we helped inform and raise awareness about the European elections, contributed to the debate on the future EU agenda for the upcoming legislative term, and developed targeted strategies to connect FEPS with the newly elected members of the European Parliament and the incoming European Commission.

## Website

Launched in 2022, the FEPS website was designed to be our virtual headquarters. Visitors can navigate a dynamic space featuring our projects, events, publications, and key information about the FEPS network. The website is intuitive and interactive, offering an engaging experience that connects users with FEPS authors and ideas. It satisfies the highest standards of aesthetics, user-friendliness and professional content.

In 2024, **we integrated the Progressive Post website** into the FEPS website, creating seamless links between FEPS publications, events, news and Progressive Post articles.

Additionally, we concentrated on transforming our website into a key reference point for our member foundations. We created an **intranet tailored specifically for members**, ensuring easy access to essential information, including a dedicated page for easy access to our logos and another one to facilitate recruitment processes.

Back-office work will continue, focusing on potential innovations, including migrating FEPS-owned secondary websites and strengthening the visibility of members and experts.

## Newsletters

In 2024, we sent 35 FEPS newsletters and 41 Progressive Post newsletters, disseminating information on articles, new publications, upcoming and past events, podcasts, and other relevant activities and news. Newsletters are now generally disseminated on fixed days of the week and planned weeks or even months in advance. However, the content of these newsletters necessitates some degree of flexibility to adapt to the evolving political context.

2024 witnessed a significant transition as we increased the number of **"thematic newsletters"**, focusing on specific priority topics. We also continued working on visual improvements and moved towards a new newsletter platform, which offers better adaptability to mobile phone users and more customisation and design possibilities. FEPS' metrics demonstrate notable success, boasting an open rate of 36.6% (compared to the 21.5% average) and a click rate of 2.9% (surpassing the 2.3% average).

## FEPS visual identity

Our communication team continues to strengthen the **FEPS brand, ensuring it remains distinctive, attractive, and recognisable to target audiences.** While maintaining consistency with our graphic charter, we innovate to keep our visual identity fresh and engaging.

Recognising the value of both digital and traditional communication tools, we enhanced our visual identity across all formats. In 2024, we systematically produced flyers and posters to promote FEPS events and publications, improved the presentation of our Library at the FEPS office and explored new ways to enhance content visibility, including updated publication displays.

FEPS branding is now more prominent both inside and outside our headquarters for physical and online events. Branded items such as cubes and roll-ups have increased our visibility. We also created an official flyer and an online presentation to introduce FEPS to new audiences.





Media partnerships & external promotion

Another novelty that followed the adoption of the Communication Strategy is the reinforcement of the external promotion of FEPS' projects through the establishment of commercial partnerships with EU-affairs influential media such as *Social Europe*, *Euractiv*, and *Politico*.

Establishing and maintaining a strong network of journalists is a long-term and permanent task. Cooperation with member foundations continues to disseminate FEPS' intellectual work beyond the traditional EU bubble audience.

In 2024, FEPS' leadership and team members and FEPS' activities were featured at least 70 times in different media outlets across Europe, including top Brussels-bubble media such as *Euronews*, *Politico* and *Euractiv* and national media such as the



*Financial Times*, *The Guardian* and *El País*. Some of the most popular topics were: Teresa Ribera (FEPS Progressive Person of the year), enlargement, EU elections, the Hungarian Presidency, housing, AI at the workplace and migration.

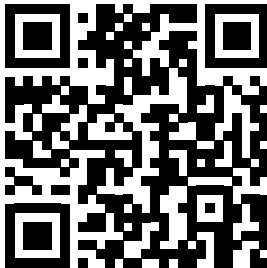


Network: member foundations and the progressive family

The FEPS member foundations and the other members of the overall progressive family are key natural allies. Therefore, the work to reinforce cooperation in the communication and media fields continues to be of strategic importance.

The EU elections have served as an opportunity to reinforce the synergies and cooperation with the progressive family partners. The regular meetings with other communication offices of the Progressive family have successfully continued. This ongoing collaboration allows us to exponentially grow the impact of each office's work and exchange best practices.

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# FEPS NETWORK

77 MEMBERS  
IN TOTAL

## NATIONAL POLITICAL FOUNDATIONS AND THINK TANKS (41)

**AUSTRIA**  
**BELGIUM**  
**BULGARIA**  
**CZECH REPUBLIC**  
**DENMARK**  
**DENMARK**  
**ESTONIA**  
**EU**  
**FINLAND**  
**FRANCE**  
**GERMANY**  
**GERMANY**  
**GERMANY**  
**GREECE**  
**HUNGARY**  
**HUNGARY**  
**HUNGARY**  
**IRELAND**  
**ITALY**  
**ITALY**  
**ITALY**  
**ITALY**  
**ITALY**  
**LUXEMBOURG**  
**MALTA**  
**NETHERLANDS**  
**NETHERLANDS**  
**NORDIC COUNCIL**  
**NORWAY**  
**POLAND**  
**PORTUGAL**  
**PORTUGAL**  
**ROMANIA**  
**SLOVENIA**  
**SPAIN**  
**SPAIN**  
**SPAIN**  
**SWEDEN**  
**SWEDEN**  
**UNITED KINGDOM**  
**UNITED KINGDOM**

Karl Renner Institut  
Institut Emile Vandervelde  
Institute for Social Integration  
Masarykova Demokraticka Akademie  
Economic Council of the Labour Movement (ECLM)  
Cevea  
Johannes Mikhelson Centre  
SOLIDAR Foundation  
Kalevi Sorsa Säätiö  
Fondation Jean-Jaurès  
Friedrich Ebert Stiftung  
Das Progressive Zentrum  
Berlin Governance Platform  
DIKTIO  
Policy Solutions  
Tancsics Mihaly Alapitvány  
Institute for Social Democracy (ISD)  
TASC Europe  
Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale (CeSPI)  
Fondazione Socialismo ETS  
Fondazione Gramsci  
Fondazione Italianeuropei  
Fondazione Pietro Nenni  
Foundation Robert Krieps  
IDEAT  
Foundation Max Van Der Stoel (FMS)  
Wiardi Beckman Stichting  
SAMAK  
Tankesmien Agenda  
Amicus Europæ  
Fundação Res Publica  
Fundação Mário Soares e Maria Barroso  
Foundation for a Democratic Left  
Progresiva  
Fundación Felipe González  
Fundació Rafael Campalans  
Fundación Pablo Iglesias  
Tankesmedja Tiden  
Olof Palme International Centre  
Progressive Britain  
The Fabian Society

## OBSERVER MEMBERS (31)

**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 Drustvo  
**GREECE** / Eteron  
**GREECE** / InSocial  
**HUNGARY** / Foundation for a New Republic  
**ISRAEL** / The Macro Center for Political Economics  
**ITALY** / Fondazione DEMO  
**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  
**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 OF FEPS (5)

**EU** / Party of European Socialists (PES)  
**EU** / Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D)  
**EU** / PES Committee of the Regions  
**EU** / PES Women  
**EU** / Young European Socialists (YES)

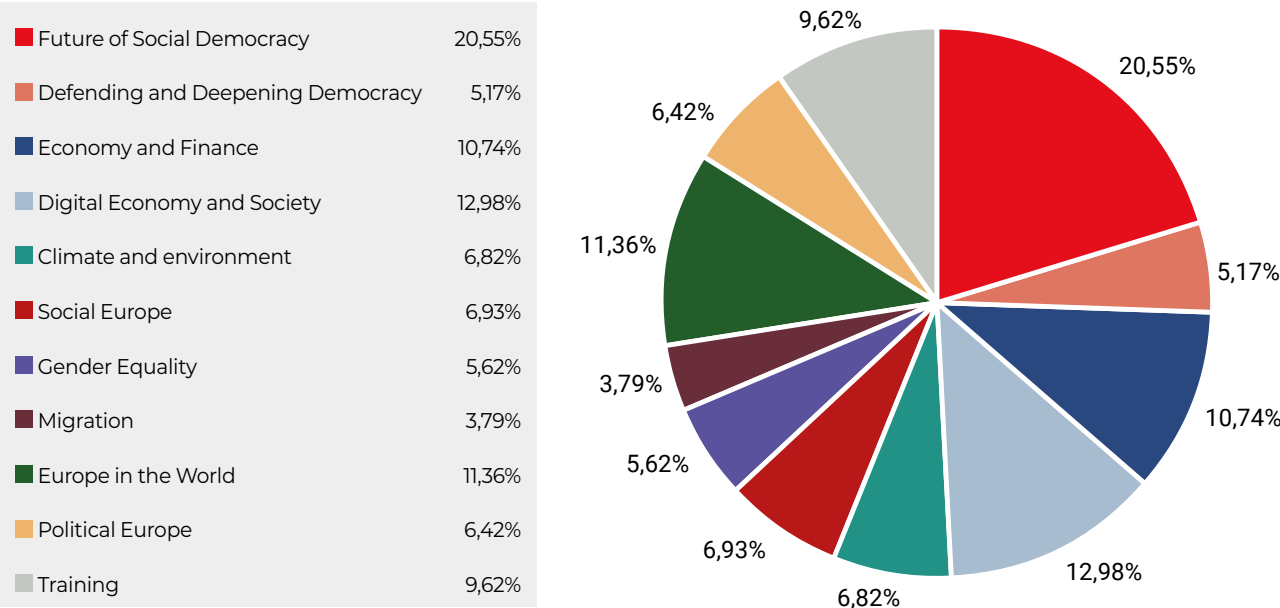


FEPS AT WORK: FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

EXPENDITURE		
	Budget 2024	Actual 2024
A.1: Personnel costs	2 736 147,45	2 697 844,77
1. Salaries and equivalent 1	2 532 941,99	2 257 458,80
2. Contributions	67 627,80	220 033,48
3. Professional training	30 000,00	10 662,29
4. Staff missions expenses	40 280,40	62 986,52
5. Other personnel costs	65 297,26	146 703,68
A.2: Infrastructure and operating costs	712 247,40	797 273,53
1. Rent, charges and maintenance costs	278 949,54	311 005,05
2. Costs relating to installation, operation and maintenance of equipment	124 233,24	126 189,05
3. Depreciation of movable and immovable property	260 000,00	277 940,88
4. Stationery and office supplies	19 064,62	28 098,73
5. Postal and telecommunications charges	30 000,00	54 039,82
6. Printing, translation and reproduction costs		
7. Other infrastructure costs		
A.3: Administrative costs	1 031 600,09	853 936,44
1. Documentation costs (newspapers, press agencies, databases)	7 000,00	9 113,23
2. Costs of studies and research	999 711,04	796 634,50
3. Legal costs	10 000,00	25 866,78
4. Accounting and audit costs	14 889,05	22 321,93
5. Miscellaneous administrative costs		
6. Support to third parties		
A.4: Meetings and representation costs	807 267,48	1 091 904,82
1. Costs of meetings	782 267,48	1 041 176,48
2. Participation in seminars and conferences	20 000,00	50 366,64
3. Representation costs	5 000,00	361,70
4. Costs of invitations		
5. Other meeting-related costs		
A.5: Information and publication costs	250 354,58	254 616,31
1. Publication costs	222 815,57	206 341,74
2. Creation and operation of internet sites and social media	2 503,55	16 618,40
3. Publicity costs	20 028,37	28 456,38
4. Communications equipment (gadgets)	5 007,09	3 199,79
5. Seminar and exhibitions		
6. Other information-related costs		
A.6. Allocation to "Provision to cover eligible costs of the first quarter of year N"		
A. TOTAL ELIGIBLE COSTS	5 537 617,00	5 695 575,87
B. Ineligible costs		
1. Allocations to other provisions		8 016,68
2. Financial charges		
3. Exchange losses		
4. Doubtful claims on third parties		164 574,97
5. Others (to be specified)		
6. Contributions in kind		
B. TOTAL INELIGIBLE COSTS	0,00	172 591,65
C. TOTAL EXPENDITURE	5 537 617,00	5 868 167,52

REVENUE		
	Budget 2025	Actual 2025
D. EP FUNDING		
1. European Parliament funding	5 260 736,00	5 204 666,00
2. Dissolution of Provision from N-1 to cover eligible costs of the first quarter of year N		
3. European Parliament funding requested (provisional) / awarded (actual) for year N	5 260 736,00	5 204 666,00
E. OWN RESOURCES		
1. Member contributions	276 881,00	583 846,48
1.1. from member organisations	276 881,00	583 846,48
1.2. from individual members		
2. Donations		29 479,00
(to be specified)		29 479,00
3. Other own resources		8 586,54
(to be specified)		8 586,54
4. Interest from pre-financing		
5. Contributions in kind		
E. TOTAL OWN RESOURCES	276 881,00	621 912,02
F. TOTAL REVENUE	5 537 617,00	5 826 578,02
G. EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT FUNDING USED TO COVER 95% OF ELIGIBLE COSTS IN YEAR N	5 260 736,15	5 410 797,08
H. PROFIT/LOSS (for provisional: shows balance, for actual: shows surplus of own resources)	0,00	-41 589,50
I. ALLOCATION OF OWN RESOURCES TO THE RESERVE ACCOUNT		
J. PROFIT/LOSS FOR VERIFYING COMPLIANCE WITH THE NO-PROFIT RULE (H-I)	0,00	-41 589,50

Activities by thematic blocks







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