

Place-based industrial policy in Europe

Thursday 19 March 2026, 09:00-12:45

@ FEPS Office, Avenue des Arts 46, Brussels

Any serious discussion of industrial policy must begin with the recognition that economic activity is fundamentally spatial. Places are not simply interchangeable economic units but unique political and social locations. Questions of local political economy, identity and culture shapes both which interventions are politically feasible and how they are implemented in practice. Sub-national state capacity, including administrative capability, technical expertise, and freedom from corruption, varies considerably and mediates policy effectiveness. The institutional thickness of a region, including universities, business associations, and civic organisations, can be as important as physical infrastructure in determining development potential. Therefore, industrial policy is not a technocratic exercise; it is a strategic tool for safeguarding democracy and resilience in an era where politics overdetermines economics and security overdetermines prosperity.

In this seminar, we are going to discuss the politics of place-based industrial policy, how political processes determine the shape of industrial policy, and how social democrats can better develop, implement and manage the politics of industrial policy in critical sectors and regions

The seminar will start with a presentation of the policy study coordinated by FEPS and Progressive Britain. The study draws on four case studies - Pori (Finland), Silicon Saxony (Germany), Port Talbot (UK) and Cornwall (UK) - to distil lessons for European and national policymakers. The second part of the event will be devoted to a discussion of local experiences and learnings from industrial policy design and implementation.

Preliminary Agenda

9:00 – 9:30	Registration of participants and welcome coffee
9:30 – 9:40	Opening remarks by Tom Collinge , Deputy Director, Progressive Britain Anna Kolesnichenko , Policy Analyst, FEPS
9:40 – 11:00	Putting places, people and power into European industrial policy Presentation of the upcoming FEPS-PB Policy Study by its authors Theo Cox , Demos Helsinki Ed Atkins , University of Bristol Gerard Rinse Oosterwijk , European Parliament <i>Followed by Q&A with the participants</i>



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11:00 – 11:15

Coffee Break

11:15 – 12:40

The politics of industrial policy

How social democrats can better develop, implement and manage the politics of industrial policy in critical sectors and regions

With keynote speech by

Matthias Ecke, MEP S&D Group

Panel discussion with

Nadia Pellefigue, Member of the European Committee of the Regions, Vice President of the Region Occitanie (France)

Lauri Inna, Mayor of Pori (Finland) (tbc)

Noah Law, MP for St Austell and Newquay (UK) (tbc)

Followed by Q&A with the participants

12:40 – 12:45

Concluding remarks by

László Andor, Secretary General, FEPS

12:45 – 13:30

Networking Lunch