



**2027 Framework Activity Programme
of the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS)**

Year 2027

**FOR A NEW PROGRESSIVE STRATEGY
FOR EUROPE**

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The FEPS (Foundation for European Progressive Studies) Framework Activity Programme (FAP) is a comprehensive document that is adopted annually by the FEPS General Assembly (FEPS GA). It defines the overarching objectives for all the Foundation's activities in the coming year, remaining in accordance with Article 4 of the FEPS Statutes. The text is being developed in a transparent, inclusive, and participatory process that ensures that the FAP remains in sync with the agenda of the European Progressive Family (Party of European Socialists and PES Women, Socialists & Democrats in the European Parliament, PES Group in CoR), as also that it meets the criteria of representativity for the FEPS member foundations. In its final version, the document serves as the basis of the grant application in response to the European Parliament's call. Then it provides the guidelines for the FEPS Work Plan.

The FEPS FAP 2027 has been drafted following a procedure that was agreed by the FEPS Bureau Core Team on 24th February 2026 – at which meeting the new process was launched, and following which a separate document “FEPS FAP 2027. Outline and timeline” was drafted. Consequently, the first consultation took place at the FEPS Scientific Council (during its meeting in Barcelona ahead of the Global Progressive Mobilisation on 17th April). Then the three strategic seminars followed (28th April, 5th May and 12th May) during which the FEPS Bureau Core Team and the FEPS Team evaluated the state of play, discussed both content and organizational development trajectories, as well as offered direct input to FAP. The main conclusions were also then shared with the FEPS Member Foundations (during the meeting on 12th May). The next steps took the draft to the FEPS Bureau Core Team (27th May), FEPS Bureau (11th June) and then, with their approval, submitted to a vote and endorsed at the FEPS General Assembly (24th June 2026). During the summer period, the document was made available for comments from FEPS Members, as well as for the process that saw specific sub-chapters developed with the support of the FEPS Team. The final and completed version was discussed by the FEPS Bureau on 24th September 2026, and after adoption, is presented herewith to the European Parliament as the basis for the grant application.

In 2027 will enter the second half of the current legislative period in the European Union. Notwithstanding some alterations among the top positions and a review of some priorities, the general patterns established after the 2024 European elections for EU decision-making are likely to continue shaping the Union. Moving away from the configuration of past decades, the centre-right forces seem to have opened up to cooperations with further-right parties and are dominating, especially in the European Commission and the Council. They seize the moment to impose their views on integration processes as hegemonic. This translates into a very specific idea on how the EU should deal with the contemporary predicaments, resorting to the enhanced politics of securitization. Consequently, it is crucial that organizations such as FEPS – Foundation for European Progressive Studies – continue to act in an agile manner and anticipate the years ahead, providing space for research, policy innovation and debate; serving as a hub of training and a pivotal stakeholder in communicating on an alternative progressive project for Europe.

The historic juncture calling for new focus

The polycrisis was the context in which European citizens previously went to the polls last time. That backdrop induced a sense of determination to seek a breakthrough, resulting in many votes cast for the parties that would articulate the blame of *the system*, antagonise *Brussels elites* and make easy promises to put an end to the difficult years. Not only was the most fragmented, polarised and right-wing leaning European Parliament elected as a result, but there was also an evident impact on the character of the European policy-making. The so-called grand coalition has been weakening, while the center-right, right and radical right (including the Euro-skeptic and anti-European) have gradually felt more empowered to dictate the terms. The norms and rationales that thus far framed the political discourse – in content and character – would also alter under the pressure of hostility and aggression coming from the more extreme, now feeling very powerful, actors. In the somewhat natural reaction, the progressive forces – described even so often as declining – felt the need to resist and defend the achievements that they kept seeing undermined. But they arrived at the crossroads, where, in between the option to continue safeguarding only or pursuing a forward-looking, clearly principles-rooted stand, they chose the latter. The Global Progressive Mobilisation (GPM) held in Barcelona in April 2026 marked, therefore, a new beginning – sealed off with the rearticulated commitment to the core values and to an understanding that it is high time to describe a new project, both for the international and the European contexts. And to that end, the strategic turn within the S&D Group in the European Parliament and the choice of six flagship policy areas to be the new battlefields signal that a new chapter has been opened, also on the EU level.

The start of this is the understanding that the European Union is first and foremost a community that is rooted in common principles. This is what has made it unique as a project that, at its inception, brought together war enemies, enabled peace and reconciliation, as well as space to join efforts to rebuild and develop in the spirit of respectful cooperation and mutual understanding for the sake of ensuring prosperity, welfare, labour rights and social progress for all. It has firmly stood on values such as equality, including, evidently, gender equality and on a model that would guarantee quality jobs and social rights. And it always embodied a sense of responsibility for the global affairs on one hand, and on the other for one another within the Communities. This is also why the idea of being united in diversity, while seeking ways to achieve more together and ensuring that all can be a part of the developments in a cohesive manner, has been at the heart. Today, these are in danger. And it is due to both centrifugal and external forces.

The Union has done admirably when it comes to standing united in the face of the Russian aggression on Ukraine, and seeing a war erupting at its doorstep. This commitment must remain unwavering. And while there have been many attempts in parallel to mitigate the impact of the situation on the EU, the most relevant question for the citizens has not been solved – namely, how they themselves can continue to feel protected and hence how to stop the economic downturn leading to the deepening cost-of-living crisis. It remains the most important concern, according to various polls and surveys, a source of anxiety about both the present and the future, and a reason for pessimism and resentment toward so-called political elites. The overpowering idea that things are getting worse, decent life unaffordable and autonomy to define the path forward shrinking, undermines the very core promise of the European project. And critically limits the space for debate: transformation is never inherently negative, and political choices can make changes that result in social progress for all. The notion that there is always a choice and not a crisis but primacy of politics, should define the trajectory of European integration must be upheld and reminded, especially now, when in 2027 there will be a reflection time around such important anniversaries as the one of the Rome Treaty and of the proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

To that end, the assessment of the proposals on how to deal with the need to rebuild, still from the COVID crisis, but also amid the new pressures, seems to point to the fact that the EU is still falling short when it comes to rising to the challenges of today and tomorrow. Moreover, in 2026, the Recovery and Resilience Facility of the Next Generation EU will be running out of its course, and in parallel, there is still no consolidated agreement on the Multiannual Financial Framework. What has been proposed thus far is definitely insufficient to make the EU meet the historical challenges it is facing, especially when combined with the proposals on rules and regulations simplification, as well as the chief preoccupation with re-arming, narrowly defined security and competitiveness.

Furthermore, the fragility of the situation is also linked to shifts taking place amid the national elections, which, in turn, influence the composition of the Council and, hence, the context for the potential compromise. In general terms, there is a real prospect that there will be a retreat on key issues – such as the European Green Deal, the already European Pillar of Social Rights, the ambition to establish Health Union, fighting against poverty, hunger and malnutrition; the Care Strategy; and the promise to do more for social inclusion and cohesion. And instead, what the EU will receive is a retreat from its principles, a weakening of the safeguards that ensure it serves all, not just a few and yet another devastating wave of neoliberal policies.

The intellectual, and consequently the political battle ahead, is therefore threefold. First, it's time to identify the key issues to focus on. They have to reflect an ambition to lead into the future and hence a capacity of political foresight, as well as an understanding that these are not the times to attempt the "catch-all" agenda and instead be selective, decisive and bold. Secondly, it is necessary to use these as pillars of what should emerge as a new, alternative progressive societal project for Europe. It must be distinctive, credible and courageous, and it must connect directly with citizens' interests. Only in that way can it be considered by them and stand a chance to become an alternative progressive doctrine for European integration. And thirdly, it is important to remember that being critical does not translate into being against by default.

This is a time that the Progressive family has to recall the core values and the lack of their implementation as the reasons for which they oppose the current direction and wish to see a different

one. In that sense, the intellectual effort must stretch the boundaries of imagination and serve as a catalyst for thinking beyond the limiting notion of a persistent crisis, the prevailing narrative of impossible choices and the need to safeguard existing achievements. Instead, this is a moment to look forward, embrace the concepts of the grand transformation and shape it by winning the primacy of the progressive ideas instead.

With this understanding, with the attention paid to the grand debates of 2026 (including especially the Barcelona GPM the new strategic priorities voted by the S&D Group), as well as comprehending the pivotal role that a progressive European Political Foundation should play in such a crucial moment, this FEPS Framework Activity Program 2027 has been drafted. And it is given the meaningful title “For a New Progressive Strategy for Europe”.

I.A The mission to move from disruption to a new beginning

The strategic choice of the focus points means they also need to be formulated in a comprehensive, complementary and very clear way. In those daring times, there can be no margin for ambiguity, since the brutalized character of contemporary politics, as well as spin that is often taken on the fake news, often leads citizens to be stuck between some false dichotomies. The purpose of the intellectual efforts by FEPS must lead towards elaborating clear-cut alternatives, translating high-quality research findings into viable solutions and pointing out to desirable long-term effects that a progressive European integration doctrine should bring. In its work, FEPS must aspire to showcase the ways in which the tectonic shifts taking place in international politics, as well as the transition moment in which the EU still finds itself, must not be discouraging – and instead can be the transformative junctions on which the Union can opt for reconnecting the ideals on which it was built with the modernising policies, the promise of peace and progress with the sound economic agenda, as well as restore itself for this and the future generations as a promise of the more prosperous, egalitarian and socially just future for all. In order to succeed, the mission must anchor in analyzing the nature and the shortcomings of the contemporary format of capitalism, alongside the technological revolution that is rapidly reframing it. And it must deliver on paving the way for this to be steered into becoming a system that works, delivering an ethically acceptable transition and socially desirable outcomes.

Leading instead of lagging behind the grand transformations

The technological transformation underpins the current reformulation of the capitalist model worldwide and, consequently, in the European Union. By choosing to define the understanding of digitalization and recognising its magnitude in such a manner, FEPS is making a conscious selection of a flagship issue that it considers both pivotal, determinant to the articulation of any new social contract in Europe in the future, and hereafter also intersectional. It builds on the understanding that this is a time for a more comprehensive approach. It is the moment for rising as a movement that can transfigure its proudest traditions of being capable of delivering a viable compromise between labor and capital.

Today, digitalisation enables many of the practices that social democrats have always seen as corrosive. It allows a great accumulation of resources, influence and wealth in the hands of the selected few – many of whom reside outside of the EU, but still possess the power to dictate the norms as well as determine the outcome of choices, from personal to the electoral ones. And it impacts people’s wellbeing, health, including mental health, as well as the relations with others, taking a toll on communities and bonds within societies. This is where the progressive thinking must seek to find

ways of re-empowering: Europe in terms of gaining digital sovereignty, states and public institutions to be shielded from undemocratic malpractices and provided with cyber-security, and finally, the citizens to have the right to access full, quality information and be protected from being manipulated to any political, consumer, cultural and social choices. Today's challenge is to pave the way forward, mindful of a humanist approach amid all that seems technical, technological and beyond control instead.

Furthermore, digitalization requires framing and democratic supervision through rules, as it determines the future shape and the relations within the world of labour, the spaces for innovation and creativity, the dynamics within the societies and the social interactions, the educational patterns and the cognitive development of the youngest, to name some pivotal reasons. There must therefore be no compromise or room for randomised interpretation when it comes to the regulations that will prevent the EU from sliding away from the pledge of full employment and quality jobs for all, from securing employees' rights, including here, for example, control over and protection from algorithmic management, the rights to privacy and the rights to disconnect. As well as when it concerns the principles of fair distribution and redistribution, disallowing the practices in which the tech giants can behave as digital oligarchs and consider themselves as recipients of major productivity gains above the need to contribute, through, i.e., adequate taxes or payment of social security and insurance fees for the workers they employ.

To that end, the EU – as a guardian of the European social model – must also be the entity that anticipates early on the social implications of these grand transitions. They tend to be underestimated, even if there are already existing reports by the international organisations that point to the fact that the digitalisation, unless governed, will deepen the existing inequalities – in between generations, genders, geographical areas and occupational fields. There will be time in between the moment in which the jobs will be destroyed or transformed, and the new ones that technology may bring will not yet be created, as well as disruptions in the system of provision of the public services and potential undermining of the rights to access public goods. People who will be affected by these hardest may not become victims of the ambiguous policies, but should be at the forefront of the political preoccupation – seeing all levels of governance from local to the European equipped to cooperate to mitigate and re-empower these individuals, groups and communities.

That also relates directly to the Union's further responsibilities in ensuring the conditions in which democracy, citizens' participation, and humanist values can thrive. This is a vastly relevant point in the times in which there continues to be so much pressure on the world of responsible journalism and traditional media, especially. The citizens must have the right to access accurate information, and that pluralism and freedom of speech must never be twisted into the right to discriminate or promote hate speech. There must be a protection of ones' privacy (as it has been stipulated in the GDPR rules) and also the minors against the negative effects of i.e. social media and other platforms designed to capture their full attention, while destroying their abilities to interact with others in real life and undermining their mental health. In general, and especially during transitions, citizens must not be deprived of their indispensable right to make informed choices.

The responsible, sound progressive policies must anticipate all these aspects and help devise ways that equip people to navigate through these and other transitions of capitalism with an objective of seeking the positive outcome of the changes together. This entails, evidently, an insistence of diligent implementation of existing legislation. But more even than that, it requires an ability to look beyond

the current horizon – imagining how this Digital Capitalist model may look in a decade and beyond, how it should be framed and what goals it should help deliver. There are many aspects to consider – as indicated already, but also many further ones – that also relate to the challenges of contemporary international politics and ways in which the new checks and balances should be defined to ensure lasting peace and balancing of powers, lasting multilateral order and democratic governance of it.

Taking into account the nature of this challenge, the need to go beyond existing compartmentalization and to see the ongoing transformations comprehensively, without, however, losing focus on the flagship battle points to FEPS being truly well placed, with its capabilities and resources, to play a pivotal role in providing a foresight-based vision, helping analyse and revise the existing legislations, as well as help build alliances with both academics, as well as civil society organisations, trade unions, journalists and other experts – whose joint voice could be decisive in making the notion of timely viable alternative heard across the audiences.

Building the European Union fit to serve the new generations

The previous elections were held amid harsh experiences, which drove many to cast their votes in ways they believed best expressed their disapproval of the state of affairs and demanded different answers. There is a possibility that the course the EU has been set on within this mandate may lead to the idea that not only, as mentioned above, the response was inadequate, but also the legislative period saw the Union gradually weakening. The 2026 State of the Union address by President of the Commission Ursula von der Leyen reaffirmed that there is a lot to be anxious about, and that the way forward should prioritize the EU's independence, understood through the principles of the augmented defense and security policies. While the current state could lead to another very precarious situation of an existential crisis, the organizations such as FEPS – pro-European and passionate about providing alternatives – see themselves as those who should concentrate on devising ways in which the EU can be re-empowered, re-energized, and re-stored as a powerful idea for the current and for the generations to come. And this is clearly a second intellectual flagship battle to combat defeatism, determinism and detrimental anxieties. The objective is to go beyond the blueprints and generic schemes, to showcase ways in which the reform and enlargement can move from projects to actions, and to ensure that the Union of the future is driven not by fear but by people's ambitions.

To start with, within the current geopolitical context, the European Union has been allowing others to dictate the terms in which it acts externally, both when it comes to the global level, as well as bilaterally towards other countries and within neighboring areas. Part of its actions have been driven by a sense of responsibility and unwavering commitment to the principles and the rule of law, and part have been designed as attempted crisis management to cushion the direct impact of the ongoing developments, such as i.e., Russia's war on Ukraine, as well as the new Middle East crisis. But amid all, the EU – that just a few years back aspired to grow in strength and retain the right to its strategic autonomy – saw itself declining to the role of co-opted invitees of the strategic talks, forced to accept the unfavorable trade deals, including the one with the US, being held hostage to diverse pressures when it comes to supply chains and itself resorting to double-standards, which is especially critical when it comes to recognising violations of the international laws and adequately responding to the dramatic situation in Gaza. This, along with the EU's weak diplomacy, significantly eroded its credibility.

There is, at the moment, not only no serious conversation about the new international doctrine for Europe, its moral obligations or role for its diplomacy, but also no thoughtful attempt to try to imagine the world that will eventually emerge after the ongoing tectonic shifts and clashes. And what it would

mean subsequently to both the EU policies and prerogatives, the nature of the alliances it works with (such as NATO and multilateral institutions it belongs to), the paradigms of security, as well as its own obligations. Contrary to the notion of preparedness, there is little of it present in assuring that the EU will be ready to stand tall in the name of international laws and mutual peaceful cooperation in the new global constellation. Neither is there a strategic thought behind the repetitions that these times call for new partnerships. Nor is there a drive to shape the policies that should be determined by the EU itself, with an attention to the geopolitical interest, of which the put on hold enlargement and ambiguity in the policies regarding the Eastern Partnership are both strong evidence. While 2026 has seen a big announcement about a new alliance with Canada to be formed, it is still leaving many questions, not only about this particular agreement, but also the repercussions of it towards the others, like the UK, Norway, or Iceland, that in the same year saw citizens rejecting the restart of the accession negotiations of the EU in a national referendum.

The same absence of strategic thought is visible in the EU's approach to its own defence build-up. The EU's response has been reactive, dictated by Russia's war on Ukraine, growing doubts over Washington's security guarantees, and Trump's imposed NATO spending targets, failing to articulate a coherent vision of a European autonomous security model. Now more than ever, smarter spending, anchored in joint procurement, a resilient and regulated EU defence industrial base and public investment that does not come at the expense of the social contract, is crucial for the EU to be a strategic actor rather than a payer of last resort. And just as there is no serious conversation about the doctrine that should guide the EU's external action, there is equally little attention to the paradigms of security themselves: and here again, preparedness cannot be reduced to militarisation, and a Union serious about standing tall for international law and peaceful cooperation must also confront the deterministic logics of hard security that shape its choices. The security policy debate is currently creating the impression that defence and deterrence are the only serious responses to multiple threats. Arms control and disarmament, by contrast, are dismissed as relics of a bygone era. When states and the EU are investing more in defence, developing new weapon systems, and private companies are gaining increasing influence in security, rules are needed to limit military force. This relates particularly to human control regarding automatic warfare/autonomous weapon systems and the questions around artificial intelligence in the military domain. And evidently, for the progressives, defense capabilities and arms control should not be considered opposites. On the contrary, because military potential is becoming crucial again, political rules are needed to govern it.

Furthermore, the current trajectory of the EU seems to be dictated by the need to deflect the imminent dangers and protect itself from a possibly perilous unknown, while it is not adequately addressing the well-identified challenges and even more so, not focused on what the EU itself could be. For that, a debate on the new development model for the Union is most urgently needed. The announcement in 2026 of the new Congress of Europe may be a space for it, as long as this format will not only focus on values and the security architecture of the continent but also on economic and social questions. When truly established following the State of the Union's promise, it would have to be then designed not to follow the fate of the Conference on the Future of Europe, which saw some significant mobilization but no lasting impact.

The fundamental aspects of the new development model for the EU are the considerations of what kind of economy Europe should aspire to become, and herewith what production and consumption models it should endorse. It is a principal question that also calls for more targeted interventions to address the growing inequalities and imbalances in power, as well as to contradict the increasingly

audacious neoliberal turn. Clearly, the reinforcement of the commitment to sustainability, a clean economy, and a just transition is of paramount importance, but in parallel, the need to return to the debate on political economy should be considered as focused on a greater socio-economic transformation. In that sense, there should remain a complementary emphasis on the industrial policies that the EU should develop and support, not only through aspirations and resources to innovate, but also through adequate governance, supervision and coordination.

For too long, the prevailing trend in economic and financial policies has been “simplification”. Business-friendly moves that allow decoupling from the social dimension dominate the agenda. Alongside the term competitiveness, which does not include the questions of fairness, managing the transformations or affordability of life amid the change. And that points to yet another element that is crucial in thinking about the new development model for the EU – namely, the labor relations and the need for pursuing the concept of economic democracy. It is disquieting how much pressure now the employees, the workers and their representatives – the trade unions are under; and how their say is being weakened amid the circumstances and the consciously undertaken disempowering actions. And while they are exposed to anxieties and frustrations, they tend to search for ways to oppose the entire system that seems beyond their control.

The argument to propose a more comprehensive approach also means forging an understanding that recovery and striving towards becoming a competitive economy will only work for Europe, if it is based on the understanding that it should generate prosperity, wealth and well-being for all. And henceafter, the new development model for the EU must also be the one to turn the page on the current chapter of rule simplification, synonymous with deregulation, and instead make the rules clearer, more binding and ensure the powers to execute them, including the conditionality mechanisms. These are principles that must be reflected not only in the new Multiannual Financial Framework, but also when implementing the budget, disallowing the gaps and loose ends that are bound to result in harm. The more elastic approach proposed today is inevitably going to lead to more poverty, decline, and whole social groups literally left behind.

In parallel to (and in consistency with) the industrial strategies, there must evidently be a cohesion agenda; in parallel to plans to expand infrastructure and transport, initiatives to ensure sound housing policies that reclaim housing as a right and public good, and ensure affordability; and in parallel to the program of labor reforms; a long overdue debate on care economy, public services and herewith especially the services of general interest. It’s been a decade since the proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights in Gothenburg and half a decade since the Porto Summit. Back then, the promises for more Social Europe were made loud and clear, and not only must they be delivered on, but also expanded, to showcase that when it comes to the social dimension, the EU has the capacity to anticipate, to help shape more egalitarian societies and be the guarantee of intergenerational fairness. With a new political agenda reaffirming the European Social Model, progressives can put forward an inclusive and fair vision of European sovereignty, rooted in the well-being of people and the planet.

This bold change of direction would also require a new institutional setup for the EU to become more functional, expand its toolbox, and affirm its prerogatives. In other words, there is an urgent need to begin preparing the groundwork for treaty reforms. For diverse reasons, it has been put aside – either because one should not be preoccupied with it amid the crisis, or because there is a potential scenario that would see not only the clash between the proponents and opponents of the treaties’ reforms, but even more between the proponents and opponents of European integration. That being said, it could

catalyze a serious conversation, could help involve citizens and take the outcomes of a consultative process more seriously. With so much popular demand for transparency, scrutiny, more participatory democracy and the effectiveness of decision-making processes, the EU cannot hold on to a compromise that was elaborated in Lisbon almost two decades ago, following the failure of the two referenda in France and the Netherlands and the constitutional crisis. It must dare to do more, and here again, organizations such as FEPS have a paramount role to play to both provoke such public reflections, feed it with sound modernizing proposals, as well as help imagine what a functional European democracy could look like and thrive in the next years and decades to come. In this context, the role of FEPS as a political foundation is a double-folded one, spanning from being a space where diverse worlds (of politics, academia, CSOs, trade unions and others) connect, as well as a laboratory of the groundbreaking ideas that yet again take debate out of the comfort zone of long-time debated pre-existing disagreements on the institutional reforms.

Empowering societies by offering viable alternatives

The empowering discourse on how to frame the alternative trajectories for digital capitalism, on the one hand and, on the other, the striving for a new development model for Europe, both serve the purpose of showcasing a viable alternative for now and in the future. But the thinking, the evidence-based and research-rooted proposals on both are to facilitate the societal transformations towards the more egalitarian, fairer, integrated and solidaristic ones. This is also why they come for FEPS hand in hand with the third flagship battle, namely to offer a grander vision on how to reconnect citizens – among themselves and with the world of politics, how to establish a sense of communities and build mutual responsibility for one another, and how to create conditions in which both all the individuals, as well as all the social groups can thrive being part of the progress.

There is a need to return to the debate on inequality, discrimination and exclusion. Contemporary societies are drained by these, with many feeling the impacts of the subsequent crises in a disproportional manner, even more so, because of the impact of COVID-19 pandemic, war and the cost-of-living crisis, which not only have an influence on their living and working conditions, but also on the entire public sector and its infrastructure that find themselves subsequently under pressure. Unequal access to power, influence, knowledge, information, resources, decision-making process, and opportunities is ostentatious, feeding a sense of failure and repulsiveness towards the systems among many citizens. They also feel that there is little prospect for social mobility of any kind, and the contributions they make – through work, volunteering or simply to their communities – are vastly disregarded by what they perceive to be the ruling elites. And it gets intensified by the so-called cultural battles, which instigate further backlash across and in particular, when it comes to gender equality.

It calls for reiterating that inequalities have not disappeared – even if they are not in the spotlight of the center-right in the EU - but have grown and call for debate, research and innovative, intersectional ways to tackle them. Supporting that is already existing academic work that shows how much there is a causal relation between the individual's insecurity at the workplace and their proclivity to vote for radical or extreme parties, between the cultural backlash and the rise of the groups that try to impress that they are supreme. This, yet again, is a preoccupation that connects with the traditional core competence of the progressives and shall be an important anchoring point for the FEPS work further on as well.

As FEPS intends to showcase a more comprehensive approach to the great transformations and the EU integration process, while at the same time setting strict objectives for the selected flagships, it also believes that when it comes to the discussion on how to create a context for thriving societies, it shall innovate by connecting some and identifying a handful of thus far dormant debates. A good example here is the question of the evolution of the intra-societal relations and demographic processes that change the compositions of the communities on the neighborhood, local and regional level, as well as beyond. These have often been either addressed indirectly through one or another thematic initiative or through brands such as intergenerational solidarity. But the ambition calls for more convergence in tying closer the questions of demography and specifically both economic and social policies, as this is the only way in which more profound progressive input can be offered to the EU level agendas and strategies, when it comes to youth, gender equality, senior citizens and others.

This also means that the themes that are often considered as difficult or politically contentious must be addressed head-on. One cannot have an ambition of being bold and do so only on expedient questions. It is the core values that should always guide the approach and the policy recommendation, and herewith it is clear that the issue on how to regulate migration and respect obligations when it comes to the asylum policies, as well as how to effectively apply the principles of human rights and do so without feeding into a potential friction with the receiving communities must be further researched, discussed and argued for. There is already much negativity, stereotypes, prejudices and fake news around this topic and hence even more the political obligation for the Progressives to continue insisting that this is one of the determining matters in creating inclusive and integrated societies.

To that end, the deliberations on the societal project should look at the ways people can become empowered and herewith emancipated from the dichotomy of false political choices of “them versus us”. This calls for restoring an idea that politics can be transformative and can deliver on the mandate extended by the citizens, which is a fair compromise for many, and which ensures that the prospects for the future are promising and can instigate hope. This is especially important for younger generations, but evidently not only for them. In broader terms, it points to a need to rethink the system, which has a democratic underpinning that must be defended – especially when it comes to fundamentals and matters such as the rule of law - but which may need revision to enable and encourage more citizens’ participation. It should be seen as a bridge to another, very important debate, namely on the role of the diverse levels of governance, from local, through regional, national and European. It has been dominated for a long time by the nationalist and conservative discourse, and it is high time to reclaim it intellectually, among other cardinal issues.

I.B Championing the role of a European political foundation and a progressive think tank

These three flagship issues, as conceptualised and explained, provide an anchoring point for this FEPS FAP 2027. They represent a set of topics meant to be in focus and, consequently, indicate an important reorientation and redefinition of organizational priorities in comparison to the previous years. The shift they bring will inspire further reviews with an ambition to build on the strengths accumulated and work on the diverse weaknesses, while raising FEPS’ profile, efficiency and impact. These evaluations and eventual adjustments will further strengthen the ability of FEPS to perform in its dual role, as the European political foundation and the progressive think tank, as well as prepare the organisation to smoothly transition into the context of the new, currently worked on regulation.

As a European political foundation, FEPS is uniquely positioned to be a hub of expertise, a space for developing policy innovations and a laboratory for the new progressive ideas regarding the alternative

trajectories for European integration. It has both the responsibility as well as the capacity to mobilise, with the support of its member foundations, scholars, experts, politicians, representatives of the civil society, youth, women and other organisations, trainers and educators, as well as simply interested citizens to adhere to the key debates, contribute to research and forging of viable policy proposals, as well as acquire relevant information and skills, and involve with the EU topics. As such, FEPS activities and communication products are consistently contributing to the strengthening of the deliberative democracy in the EU, especially by providing support for the public when defining the desirable course for the years to come.

As a European progressive think tank, FEPS is benefiting from the close relations with the progressive stakeholders – S&D Group in the European Parliament, PES, the sister parties and PES Women, PES Group in the CoR, YES, Rainbow Rose and ESO, as well as the Socialist International, the Progressive Alliance and the Global Progressive Forum – to name a few, fulfilling a role of a space and opportunities creator for diverse progressive perspectives to meet, be reflected on and compared, and then fine-tuned before they feed the subsequent policy proposals. In that sense, the intersectional and trans-national character of the work of FEPS enables forging stronger connections between the levels where people get engaged – either in academia, civil society, political thinking and politics, while creating a transmission belt between these individuals, communities, and networks and the EU progressive political agency. In 2027, this mission of FEPS will further be increased, as FEPS sees the results of the Global Progressive Mobilisation (GPM) in Barcelona, as well as the new approach of the S&D Group and its strategic turn, and the search for the new grand alternative progressive project for Europe in terms of its own obligation to feed into the subsequent debates.

There, it is relevant to recall that while the expertise and focus of FEPS lies strongly on the EU-level, that emphasis is, in an inextricable manner, is also providing a space for deliberations on how the progressive project for Europe translates into the proposals for the EU external agenda and the need to actively participate in the formation of the new global order. There, as a European progressive think tank, FEPS is well-positioned to combine the understanding of the inner and outer EU prospects. It has in its network political foundations, think tanks and institutes from within the EU candidate countries and countries connected through diverse partnership agreements. And it remains an active member of the UN ECOSOC and has recently been recognized as part of the G20 process.

Succeeding in the current situation of the centre-left

The challenge to succeed in its dual role as a European political foundation and progressive think tank is an outstanding one in the circumstances that the center-left finds itself at the moment. On the EU level, the alliances are shifting, and the social democrats find themselves not infrequently in a minoritarian position. At the same time, the new majorities include the parties and groups whose political narrative stands in contradiction not only to the progressive beliefs, but also, in their opinion, to what constitutes indispensable core values on which the EU has been founded. On the national level, profound transformations are underway, and elections lead to complete alterations in the institutionalized political spectrum. By the time of drafting this FEPS FAP for 2027, in five of the Member States, PES sister parties are no longer represented in the national parliaments. And they only see four, possibly five, Prime Ministers from within the political family within the Council.

Our answers to contemporary challenges will determine whether the centre left continues as a first or a second order political force in Europe. And in how far it is the social democrats that will continue being seen as the major political agent of the progressive agenda. FEPS sees its mission in showcasing

that neither defeatism nor determinism should take over. With a focus on European integration, we have the capacity to seek ideas, comprehensive as well as detailed proposals for the renewal of the movement. To deepen the analysis of European Social Democracy, FEPS can build further on the proud legacy of the Next Left Research Programme (established in 2009) extending its scope, as well as engage in further new initiatives.

Comprehending the electoral results and their consequences

For some years the dominant claim has been an overall crisis of all the so-called traditional parties. Today, there is a need to look at this question in a more nuanced way. First, because political parties' families clearly do not have the same resilience to the impact of the defeats and consequently the same abilities to bounce back. Some have already succeeded in leaving the point of particular predicament. Secondly, because the situation is more complex and there are parallels with the distrust manifested towards the institutions, as well as towards the state. With the growing fragmentation and polarisation, the traditional definitions of the roles of the party to win an election and gain power to influence the government are neither fully applicable nor exhaustive in the context in which a landslide may be in many states the thing of the past. And so are also the previously natural coalitions. Thirdly, already at the time of the European elections, there was a disparity visible between the Western and Eastern social democratic parties' results. Today, in four Member States in Central and Eastern Europe, PES sister parties are no longer represented in the parliament. And the projections are that this may be the course also for the European Parliament at the time of the next vote. That said, while evidently the standing and capacity to rebuild in the CEE region are of a greater concern in this EU legislative mandate in particular, there is no place for complacency in analyzing the situation elsewhere. In several Member States, sister parties recorded the worst election results and a harsh drop in the opinion polls to single digits (and often historical lows).

Consequently, with the evolving circumstances, progressive forces have a mission ahead of them that cannot be reduced to the horizon of reversing the electoral numbers. The preoccupation should be considered in a more multifaceted way. To start with, clearly in some of the recent national votes, social democrats are neither considered as a programmatic alternative, nor as a strategically smart choice – even for those who used to form their so-called 'core electorate'. To overcome this, they have to re-emerge both with a new grand viable project, but also, especially for the time being, think about how to rise as the main political force in the opposition. It will take a new strategy to figure out how to maintain the primacy of political ideas on one hand, and on the other hand, remain a determinant agent in these new, diversified, often fragmented and polarised constellations.

Daring to dare

Another important aspect of the electoral results is the sense of being outmaneuvered, outnumbered and almost perpetually in need to defend the past achievement. It has been noticeable in the context of the EU-level politics, but is not dissimilar to the state of play within the Member States or in the regional parliaments. The difficulty here is not only about having the space to propose and the necessary power to see policy proposals successfully through, but also the sense that the politics have changed, and so have the proverbial rules of the game. The drift towards the right gave way to the behaviors and attitudes that, for the progressives, are unacceptable in modern democracies, as well as irresponsible when it comes to the populist parties promising unattainable goals. The argument here is not to copy or compete, but to meet the proponents' ignorance, arrogance and disregard for democratic norms with a daring vision that goes beyond a managerial political approach (aka deliverism), which remains coherent with social democratic principles.

The centre-left has an incomparably strong affiliation with the fundamental values that led to the movement's foundations and have been guiding it ever since. This is the time for these to be repeated, reinforced and clearly translated into a new, alternative and hopeful societal project that befits the contemporary reality. These proposals would allow showcasing that progressives are the movement with a future, with a future outlook and with the ability to deliver on this different future. This was the empowering sense with which the Global Progressive Mobilization in Barcelona ended, but remains the most valuable guideline, especially for the progressive politics' stakeholders on the EU level. In those circumstances, more than before, there is a need to coordinate and refocus in order to reclaim the ground. That is also why the strategic turn and a different, more selective in focus approach of S&D Group is of such importance. And when it comes to intellectual underpinning, as well as reinforcement of the programmatic narrative, organizations such as FEPS are to play a relevant role.

Defining progressive alliances in the new context

Today we are observing the emergence of the block-type politics both within the Member States and on the EU level through the amities between the traditional centre right and radical right. At the same time, there is also a persistent segmentation on the left which in some countries sees the more radical left being the direct competition to the social democrats. There is no one uniform answer on how to tackle this, as on the national level the available solutions are dependent on political culture, and on the EU level, there are diverse patterns of coordination among the democratic forces and partnerships behind specific political projects. For the progressive movement to avoid becoming an unfortunate hostage of other forces' alliances, it is important to retain its power of say, which can only come from the ability to present the most compelling, convincing political alternative that can mobilize and align also the others.

The ideological integrity, the political credibility and the open character of the proposals are the key to striving to build new majorities (among the political parties and with the other stakeholders, such as trade unions and civil societies) and consequently to the fight for the hegemony of the progressive ideas. Progressive must hold onto their values, reclaim those that they stand for but are not always associated with anymore (such as freedom and empowerment), but also answer the question: who they wish to represent and what that means for the hierarchy of the issues they wish to put up front.

While for sister parties across Europe and at EU level the likely course of action will be to state that they feel most affinity with the world of labour and this is the constituency that they wish to be standing for first, they must also challenge themselves to see that the concept of work, what it means for the employees and workers, as well as in how far it remains the first point of self-identification for the citizens across Europe, has changed. There are growing divides between those, whose jobs are seen as the occupations of the past, and those who are taking the jobs the importance of which will increase in the next stage of the green and digital transition. As well as those, who have diverse types of contracts; those who can sustain themselves with their own labour and those who additionally need to rely on the welfare system to provide; those who can count on career prospects and those who seem most volatile; those who are from privileged and those who are from impoverished backgrounds. Traditional social democracy has always been focused on forging an alliance between the lower and middle classes, but the contemporary voting patterns deviate from this old model. There is a need to bridge beyond diverse divides (age, gender, education, occupation, average income, etc. of the cohorts, place of residence and others) and show how, amid the transformations, a better, fairer future

with quality employment, equality at the workplace and social justice for all. With this precise understanding, FEPS reframed the priorities towards the ones that guide this year's FAP 2027 and see the working on the progressive standpoint vis-à-vis digital capitalism as the pivotal ideological battle.

Aspiring to become an inspiring example

In the given context FEPS, as a European political foundation and a progressive think tank, is determined to deliver quality, adapt where necessary and innovate where possible in 2027 too.

FEPS remains a repository of sound analysis and thought-provoking ideas, and it will continue pursuing research that anticipates the grand debates, provides important analyses and assessments, and serves as a platform for academic research and European politics to meet. That said, the pledge, in accordance with the sense of this year's FEPS FAP, is that there will be continued efforts to raise the organization's profile, consolidate expertise and competences and ensure a greater impact. Output objectives will also be reviewed and fine-tuned in order to help the internal evaluation processes, which should help further adaptation leading to the most strategic use of the FEPS resources.

Furthermore, FEPS is determined to continue exploring the ways in which its capacities can serve further innovations. While the scholarly debates, especially when led at the junctions of the world of academia and politics, by default lead to exceptional reflections and hence with creative moments, FEPS across its activities has also other possibilities to experiment and identify ways in which traditional politics and parties can be modernized. Here, especially the fields of training and informal education, as well as FEPS communication, must be seen as instrumental.

To that end, while the new regulations for the European political foundations are being put in place, FEPS will have to make a transition to a new operational model (especially what concerns funding). It will therefore give a further meaning to being a *European think tank*, enhancing even further the European dimension of all its activities and the EU-level applicability of all the outcomes. But as a *European political foundation* it will remain an umbrella organisation, a network and a pluralist, participatory and inclusive hub. Therefore, it will work relentlessly on the statutory reform (and relevant internal by-laws) to accommodate the regulatory changes, as well as do its utmost to reframe in their spirit the relations with sister organisations, members, and partners in an adequate manner.

The meaning of membership within FEPS will be redefined, also with the clarification to mutually reinforcing dimensions between singular actors and FEPS as a community. Changes in our regulatory environment necessitate a transition to a new model in which the Membership will have to value FEPS not project by project but the organisation and its performance as a whole. Setting these relations anew in a way that will continue enabling FEPS to work across the EU with all the members in an adjusted manner, as well as coordinate well with the PES and PES Women, S&D Group in the EP, PES Group in CoR, YES and other sister organisations, as well as partners in Brussels, is of paramount importance.

I.C FEPS organisational standing

FEPS is a European political foundation registered under the number EUPF4BE0896.230.213. It was created 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). Consequently, and as explained in the FEPS Statutes (adopted with changes at the extraordinary FEPS GA on 30th April 2021), its ambition is to undertake intellectual reflection at the service of the progressive movement,

in pursuit of strengthening and promoting the founding principles of the European Union. These are: freedom, equality, solidarity, democracy, respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, and human dignity, and the rule of law. Consequently, the ambition of FEPS is to strengthen its position as the leading institute when it comes to progressive thinking about the future of the EU.

In 2027, FEPS can already rely on 79 members: 39 full, 33 observers, and 5 ex-officio ones. There are also several applications that are currently being considered to ensure that the membership covers the entire geographical area of the European Union, as well as efforts made to ensure that FEPS can be fully operational across the entire Union's territory – if and when the long-awaited enlargement takes place. Additionally, FEPS engages through research, events, training activities, and publications with an extensive network of partners, among whom are: renowned academics and universities, as also political leaders, trade unions and civil society experts. These credentials have made FEPS recognized as an important stakeholder both in international rankings of the foundations and think tanks (see i.e. the Pennsylvania Global Think Tank Index), as well as in awarding it with the UN ECOSOC consultative member status.

Since 2019, FEPS has already undergone a profound internal transformation. This pertained to internal governance mechanisms (in the interest of transparency and accountability standards), key procedures, and the gradual implementation of diverse strategies (communication, financial, human resources, international relations, and training). Under the leadership of the General Assembly, President, Secretary General, and Bureau (and Bureau Core Team), and with the advice of its Scientific Council (which in 2025 was reorganised), as well as in consultation with the Members (through i.e. bi-annual Members Meetings), FEPS can rely on a committed team of professionals for its day-to-day management. Moreover, it has built a set of important assets, of which prominent examples are: a headquarters that is modern and serves all the needs of a leading think tank; as also virtual platforms that enhance the brand and facilitate external communication.

FEPS' operational planning is based on annual cycles (while e.g. the key annual events represent long-term commitments and multiannual planning in practice). Wherever possible, diverse FEPS-led initiatives have been turned into programmes, through which the consortia of the members partnering in them were built. This allowed FEPS to ensure both the greater outreach and impact, contributing to further fostering of the networks and audiences. The emphasis on the longer-term perspective, as well as commitment to ensure representativeness in all the initiatives (when it comes to gender, generations, geographical regions, especially) contributed to further improvements when it comes to complementarity of perspectives and wider applicability of the elaborated proposals, which in turn could embody an understanding of both the EU and Member States' policy levels.

These avenues for enhancements will further be pursued in 2027 by FEPS, with attention paid especially to ensuring even more constructive relations with scholars and academia on the one hand, and on the other to rephrase the patterns of cooperation with member foundations in the light of the new regulations on the EU level. FEPS remains particularly committed to ensuring that it is represented in all the EU member states through members and, with their support and new cost-sharing mechanisms, leads initiatives that resonate across the Union. Through the periodical Members Meeting, FEPS will also ensure that all members maintain their engagements within the framework outlined by the FAP, when it comes to joining the FEPS-led activities and programmes.

FEPS sees its mission as both developing diverse initiatives and leading by example. It resonates in continuous commitment to the core values such as equality, diversity and inclusion. These are rooted in the FEPS Statutes, which define governing and working methods, as well as the organisation's culture and approach to human resources practices. Herewith, FEPS remains committed to inclusive programming (integrating gender mainstreaming and diversity perspective across the activities), balanced representation (across all the initiatives and publications, as pledged while signing to Brussels Binder), respectful and inclusive communication (promoting gender sensitive language, while challenging discrimination and fighting stereotypes), building further capacity, actively involving the representatives of the more vulnerable social groups and raise awareness aimed at creating fairer, more cohesive and egalitarian societies.

In that spirit, the FAP 2027 is being drafted, centered on 3 Annual Priorities that will determine FEPS's work in the coming year. These are guidelines and will be observed across all the fields, thematic and others, within FEPS. They will also serve as a reference point and evaluation criteria in selecting the ideas that will be turned into projects. FEPS aims to build on its robust legacy, accelerate and improve, especially what concerns efficiency and outreach.

II | MISSION HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2027: NEW FOCUS AND DEEPER COOPERATIONS

The FEPS ambition for 2027 is to consolidate the position of a European intellectual powerhouse, providing the space for research, politics, diverse expertise and experience to meet, deliberate and come up with creative, innovative elements that will all help pave the way towards a new progressive strategy for Europe. These are the core objectives of the mission that FEPS plans to undertake as a European political foundation, as well as a progressive think tank with an aspiration to remain intellectually inspiring, strategically instructive and both academically and politically impactful.

This means that while FEPS will build on the existing credentials, it will also continue improving and evolving, with a review process that was initiated with the election of the new leadership at the extraordinary general assembly in December 2025. It has already resulted in redefining the annual priorities and herewith giving a new orientation, but is further meant to see assessments that can help reach a higher degree of scholarly excellence, raise political relevance and impact, facilitate innovations and more effective communication.

The new aims and requirements will likely translate into further adaptation of our organization, optimizing the ways FEPS works with members and partners, and will evidently aim at enhancing and coordinating even more with the stakeholders within the Progressive family. At EU level this refers to the S&D Group, and the Members of the European Parliament, EU Commissioners, President and Members of the Committee of the Regions, progressive representatives of European Economic and Social Council, as also PES, PES Women, Rainbow Rose, YES, ESO, Rainbow Rose, Socialist International, Global Progressive Forum and Progressive Alliance, as well as the teams of all these organisations. On the national and local level, it refers to progressives both in leading positions (MPs, Ministers, party leaders, local and regional representatives), and progressive movement members at large.

In times when the EU and its integration processes are questioned by so many, FEPS, in particular, sees its role as a creative platform between the debates and big questions posed on the EU level and audiences across the Union and beyond. For that reason as well, it will continue in its work to connect and communicate with relevant politicians, experts, academics, trade unionists, civil society stakeholders and members of the public; and through a dialogue, contribute to building mutual understanding across the EU Member States and beyond the EU, among the sister and partner organisations, among communities and citizens.

With that ambition and the attention to the core processes and documents adopted within the political family, including the declarations adopted by the PES Congress in Amsterdam in 2025, the outcomes of the GPM in 2026, as well as the S&D Group reflection on “The Strategic Turn”, FEPS sees the three thematic priorities for 2027 as follows.

- 1) For autonomy, empowerment and social justice when confronting digital capitalism**
- 2) For peace, sustainability and prosperity for all when forging a new development model for a sovereign Europe and defining it's role internationally**
- 3) For solidarity, equality and democracy when defining the next grand societal project**

Against the background of the analyses provided in Chapter I of the FEPS FAP 2027, these priorities translate into the focus for the FEPS initiatives carried out across the Thematic Fields.

III | CORE THEMES AND FUNCTIONS: POLICY FIELDS WITH LONG-TERM COMMITMENTS

III. A Long-term thematic commitments

FEPS has a tradition of organising itself around the **10 Thematic Fields plus Training** (which in 2026 was converged into a multi-stakeholder program and brought under a common label of “European Progressive Training Lab”). The enduring format of the work division ensures that, on these topics, FEPS has established know-how, a repository of research and publications, and corresponding communities of experts. This enables the development of a competitive edge and capacity for innovation, while building on existing output and identifying new, strategically relevant focus points.

With the redefinition of **the 3 Annual Priorities**, the focus of the 10 Thematic Fields and Training (which in 2026 turned into the European Progressive Training Lab), as well as the sequence of the Thematic Field’s appearance in the FEPS FAP has changed as well. This evolutionary approach may lead to further gradual review and adjustments, which, in the next two years, especially, may result in fine-tuning, mergers or additions of the Thematic Fields. With this transformative approach, and with the attention to how the 10 Thematic Fields plus Training should contribute to profiling FEPS around the 3 Annual Priorities, the articulation of these for 2027 is:

1. **SOCIAL EUROPE** – developing new ideas and proposing a new socio-economic agenda, centered around the social dimension of European sovereignty, while further advancing the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, ensuring access to affordable and quality housing, contributing to the eradication of poverty and homelessness, consolidating a Health Union, as well as promoting, i.e. social investment within the new MFF.
2. **ECONOMY AND FINANCE** – designing a resilient and sustainable economic development model, to forge policy proposals towards a job-rich and clean industrial policy, European fiscal capacity and fair taxation to support the innovative, fair, competitive and productive economy, and scaling up of economic democracy, aiming at an EU-wide prosperity plan with a broad appeal.
3. **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.
4. **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, support adaptation and mitigation measures, create new clean jobs and mainstream climate and ecological objectives in European policies.
5. **EUROPE IN THE WORLD** – focusing on the EU’s role in striving for peace, human security and sustainable development in a new multipolar global order, as well as relations with strategic partners in diverse formats of alliances, partnerships and neighbourhood policies. Responding to conflicts and global imbalances are key questions, at a time when the EU is also building a stronger defense profile.

6. **MIGRATION** – informing and sustaining a fair debate on asylum and migration, prioritising the monitoring of the Pact on Migration and Asylum’s implementation and the development of integration and labour policies that actively build social cohesion; defining the features of an efficient and humane migration management; developing fair and transparent relations with the countries of origin and transit; as well as analysing the vital link between Europe’s demographic challenges and migration dynamics.
7. **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, strengthening and enlargement, as well as strategic partnerships
8. **DEFENDING AND DEEPENING DEMOCRACY** – analysing the main threats to democracy (far right politics, authoritarian tendencies, nationalism) inside but also outside the European Union – in order to find ways to foster participatory and representative democracy, with a specific focus on young people.
9. **GENDER EQUALITY AND EQUAL SOCIETIES** – strengthening the commitment to the feminist and gender equality agenda, with a focus on preventing backsliding, delivering substantive equality through transformative, gender mainstreamed and intersectional policies, with particular attention to the care economy and digitalisation.
10. **FUTURE OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY** – analysing the positioning of the progressive forces across the levels of governance and in the opposition, with a focus on their programmatic and strategic dilemmas, organisational difficulties and electoral appeal, while looking at ways of restoring its capacity to frame public debates, to anticipate the societal transformations and to appeal to voters as a strategically viable alternative.

And the more detailed description of the building blocks of the 10 Thematic will be found in Annex 1 of this document (*that will be featured in the final version of the FEPS FAP 2027*).

III. B FEPS training programme – the European Progressive Training Lab

In January 2022, the FEPS Bureau endorsed the FEPS Training Strategy (TS), laying the foundations for the construction of a genuine FEPS Training Programme. The adoption of the Training Strategy consolidated and was the basis to reorganize the educational activities of FEPS, helped build its profile as a European-level training competence center, paved the way to the creation of the consortium with Members who work in this area, and prompted important innovations.

The initiatives created by FEPS resonated and were received with a high demand from the side of members (as illustrated also in the Work Plan and Budgets of the past years). Consequently, there has been a growing support for these endeavors and in 2026 this led to the next step, namely the creation of the multifaceted, multi-stakeholders’ Training Programme, which received the name of “The European Progressive Training Lab” (EPTL). In the creation year, it has been supported actively by several organisations: Karl Renner Institut, FMS, Olof Palme Center, Amicus Europae, FES Competence Center on the future of work, respective FES offices, Fondazione Pietro Nenni and EterOn – to name just a few.

The ambition for 2027 is to continue, converging the profile, deepening the partnerships, innovating methodologies, and also contributing to the development of the civic, non-formal and informal political education in the EU. With the refocus on the priorities at FEPS, the content that will be geared within the EPTL, as well as the outcomes will be designed with the view on how it can 1) further

facilitate the understanding of the Digital Capitalism and progressive alternative paths for the future transition; 2) promote the knowledge about the EU and empower citizens from both the Union, as well as candidate countries to understand the functioning of the current and options for the future model; 3) create spaces to test, debate and evaluate the ideas that can lead to emergence of the progressive grand societal project.

The EPTL for 2027 will build on the experience of the following pre-existing activities:

Category 1: Sharing knowledge and facilitating understanding about alternatives to Digital Capitalism

Pool of Trainers | Throughout the year

One of the core elements of the FEPS EPTL is the Pool of Trainers, founded thanks to the support of the FMS and Karl Renner Institut. It is created through a sequence of Training for Trainers and remains at service, providing inspiration and experts ready to offer instructive sessions. The trainers synthesize and consolidate the Toolbox manuals of civic education and informal learning. And they also provide Skills Boosters sessions at the fringe of all the major gatherings of the European progressive family. Importantly, in order to bring consistency to the quality of training and raise the standards provided by FEPS, only the Members of the Pool of Trainers are, in principle, entitled to offer training within FEPS educational projects.

In 2027, a silver thread to the work within the Pool of Trainers will be to look at the circumstances of digital capitalism from the perspective of educators, facilitators and trainers – developing both methodology for participatory, empowering debates that use new formats, as well as seeking ways in which new set of trainings could be designed (and manuals with them) to empower citizens to grasp the nature of this capitalist model and the alternatives to the circumstances at hand.

Skills boosters | Throughout the year

The Skills Boosters are designed as special, participatory sessions at the fringe of the major (progressive) events addressed to all who wish to acquire new knowledge, learn skills and exchange on the best practices with the Trainers and other participants. Open to all, they are prepared and delivered by the members of the Pool of Trainers, and always summarised with a manual that is then available for the broader public via the FEPS website.

In 2027, building on the Training of Trainers held in the Hague in 2026 and the Manuals produced at this occasion, the Skills boosters can be refocused around the understanding of Digital Capitalism, Europe's predicaments regarding the digital transition, as well as ways in which the progressives can find themselves anew in the current reality, benefiting from innovations (when applicable) i.e. in defining new ways to run participatory, interactive meetings.

Category 2: Sharing knowledge and empowering citizens in the debate on the European developmental model

FEPS Annual Autumn Academy | Brussels, Belgium | September / October 2027

Following the successful launch of this initiative in 2019, the perpetual encouraging feedback from the Members and partners, as well as a growing impressive community of prominent alumni, FEPS is planning to keep the FEPS Annual Autumn Academy (AAA) as a flagship initiative of the EPTL. FEPS is planning to ensure that whilst the design of the program will evolve, in principle, it will always include

a set of well-established and effective methods. In the schedule that means including: lecture by prominent personalities, direct exchanges with European leaders (Special Guests), discussions on priority topics with the European stakeholders, as also meeting with potential progressive allies and partners, such as the Party of European Socialists and PES Women, the S&D Group in the European Parliament, PES Group at the Committee of Regions, Young European Socialists, and Rainbow Rose, among others. The AAA will continue providing thematic and country case study-focused workshops, an introduction to best practices of advocacy and public communication, as well as spaces for political creativity. It will continue hosting the launch of the FEPS Primers, and as an innovation, it will also include one item open to the broader public.

For 2027 edition, the ambition is to design the programme in a way that it can focus on two themes of the European developmental model and create synergies between the content of the AAA learning materials and the New Congress in Europe debates (which initiative was announced in SOTEU 2026 as marking a jubilee moment of the Treaty of Rome and giving a chance to debate the future of the Union).

FEPS Open Progressive University

FEPS Open Progressive University (OPU) is a new and pioneering initiative that aims to provide progressive audiences with access to knowledge about the progressive movement's principles, history, and ideas for the future. OPU is powered via an online platform (LMS) and is being designed with the goal of building 3 thematic modules per year. The pilot phase was inaugurated on 23rd May 2023 with a lecture by Paul Magnette, PS President and Professor. Then the class of 46 students began exploring topics related to the 3 first three modules: Next Left, Resilience and Sustainability and Gender Equality. The efforts have continued in 2025, in cooperation with S&D Group and FMS, whereby OPU has developed a special module: the Progressive Ukraine Programme – which ran for over a year and saw the first class graduating. This is supposed to continue for the second edition in 2027, following the recruitment in autumn 2026. The objective of the 2nd module will be to engage young Ukrainians in an educational initiatives that will allow them to deepend their understanding about the Union (especially what it can and cannot do in the context of the brutal Russian war on Ukraine); to explore diverse policy fields (with also a view of what has been achieved within them and what that would mean for the negotiation process of Ukraine); and to learn about the EU views on the geopolitics (especially here the questions of enlargement, diverse format of the EU partnerships, trade agreements and others).

FEPS Primers | Throughout the year

Following the success of the first primers (educational books on the politics and policies of the European Union), FEPS is hoping to pursue next editions within the scope of the FEPS EPTL and FEPS publications. The objective of the previous and the upcoming books remains to offer access to knowledge on the EU, its policies and help raise the level about the alternatives all across the EU and beyond.

The European Political Academies | Throughout the year

The Training strategy envisaged a space for the training organised in respective member states, which would be focused on building capacity and connecting the national and European themes. The blueprint has been the FEPS – Renner Institut Europapolitische Akademie, which successful model has served as inspiration for several sister editions with partners in Poland, Hungary, and Italy, as well as Switzerland. The reform of 2026 brought a new approach, within which the consideration remains on how to launch the FEPS-led the European Political Academy, which would help FEPS lead more

efficiently and coordinate diverse programmes with the view of upscaling the European dimension and multilateral peer learning. For that reason, there has been a refocus and an addition to the sessions in the country and the seminars in Brussels, namely a set of common training sessions. The pilot edition would run in 2027 and will be evaluated at the end of the year.

Friends of Eastern Partnership | Throughout the year

This particular training initiative is addressed to the young people from Belarus, Ukraine, Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan with an objective to provide them with knowledge regarding the EU and the EU integration, as well as the space to discuss and learn from each other's experiences how to establish and stabilise democracies, how to empower citizens and civic movements, as well as the role the progressives should play in promoting and forging democratic systems.

If continued in 2027, attention will be paid when defining the content to the questions of the ways the EU shapes its relations anew across the globe and in the proxime neighbourhood. The title of this project is to be reconsidered to ensure consistency with broader FEPS branding.

Category 3: Create spaces to test, debate and evaluate ideas that can lead to emergence of the progressive grand societal project

Young Academics Network 'FEPS YAN' | Jubilee 10th edition Throughout the year

This European-wide network, which FEPS established in 2010 with the support of Karl Renner Institut, has been involved with seven cycles and over 600 young researchers (pre-PhD and post-doctoral scholars) from across Europe. The network (consisting of 30—35 participants from a great variety of national and scholarly backgrounds) meets several times a year, and depending on their respective expertise, their representatives also become involved in other FEPS initiatives and activities. At the moment of drafting FAP 2027, FEPS has just published the outcomes of the 9th cycle (7 policy papers), as well as successfully finalized the process of recruitment and consolidation of the YAN for the 10th Jubilee cycle, which will continue and end in 2027. In the planning, there are not only the regular FEPS YAN activities and work within the interdisciplinary thematic groups under the mentorship of both political and academic mentors, but also special events that will feature the work completed by the alumni. This will create not only a bridge between the YAN's generations, but also a vehicle to harness some of the innovative ideas that those very prominent by now scholars have been working on ever since.

The ambition for 2027 is additionally to build on the debate of the new scholars, who all chose themes that relate to the challenges of the contemporary times and seek to translate the contributions of the innovative, interdisciplinary research, particularly to be a contribution to FEPS ambitions regarding the third annual priority – *For solidarity, equality and democracy when defining the next grand societal project*.

Ones to Watch | Throughout the year

FEPS "Ones to Watch" is an initiative that was launched in 2015 as an alternative, innovative approach to the challenges faced particularly within the region of Central and Eastern Europe. It is understood as the group of 11 countries that joined the EU in 2004, 2007 and 2013. The events gather representatives from these member states in a number of three per country, all of whom are between 35-45 years of age and are already elected politicians. At the moment of drafting, the 3rd cycle is about to start a recruitment process and an inaugural session for the new cycle in 2027. The planning henceforth will also take into consideration and will remain closely interrelated with the FEPS work on the state of social democracy in the region.

For 2027, Ones to Watch sessions will be particularly focused on debating the regional take on the EU, its policies, as well as social democracy, and what kind of *European societal project* could turn the current political trends in the CEE.

All the aspects of the Training Programme will continue being conducted with respect of the principles of equality, inclusivity and respect, paying particular attention to ensuring diversity, equal access and representativeness among themes, trainers and lecturers, as well as participants.

III.C FEPS consultancy

FEPS is proud to have developed a capacity to offer timely and high-quality policy consultancy to progressive policy makers in office or opposition at various stages of the policy process. Current and past research initiatives, and contributions of the extensive expert network provide a solid basis for FEPS to be in a position from which it can deliver sound policy advice. The main format that helps gearing it is the following one:

FEPS Review Meetings | Brussels, Belgium | Throughout the year

Following the FEPS General Assembly in June 2017, as well as the decisions taken at the subsequent meetings of the FEPS Bureau, FEPS has been organising the “Review Meetings”. They can serve a triple objective: assessment of what has been achieved already within the respective thematic programmes of FEPS; developing the interactions between key stakeholders from the world of politics and academia; enabling identifying new potential priorities to be developed by the Progressive family and FEPS. In that framework, FEPS would like to explore more formalised ways to address the Progressive Commissioners, their respective sherpas; leadership of the PES, S&D Group, CoR and the top advisors in those respective institutions as well. The optimum frequency of Review Meetings is 2 or 3 per year, in order to allow all key issues among the long-term thematic commitments covered at least once in a five-year cycle.

IV. | FEPS ANNUAL ACTIVITIES AND FLAGSHIP PROGRAMMES

FEPS Annual Activities and Flagship programmes are diverse initiatives developed through the history of FEPS. They became recognizable trademarks and as such contribute to the FEPS brand and overall organisational value significantly. They are anticipated milestones and often prioritised within the Foundation's annual planning. Their significance may come from their size, outreach and impact, or the concentration of stakeholders and prominent participants. This section of the FAP caters for the needs of multiannual planning. Nevertheless, activities in this chapter, when filled with new content in every new edition, serve as vessels to carry the intellectual content generated by FEPS towards our core audience and beyond. Maintaining them, with continued innovation and improvement especially what concerns outreach, is key for our organization's strength and strategic positioning.

As they are well established, such reference point activities represent continuity in the FEPS Work Plan, subject to consideration of available resources and thematic preferences of the given period as judged by FEPS leadership. Early planning of FEPS-led flagship activities also allows sufficient time to ensure the respective partners' initial and then contractual commitments to joining in these endeavors, in parallel with setting an adequate communication strategy and, whenever applicable, procedures for both mobilization for and dissemination of the outcome.

The commitment for 2027 is to pay further attention to the impact criteria and review more profoundly several of these, which have been run successfully for a number of years. Part of this assessment will be focused on further deepening these initiatives' pan-European character, expanding (where applicable) the number of partners and further diversification of the audiences (with a special focus on strengthening the ties with not only the political stakeholders, but especially the academics and the civil society representatives). Thus, the ambition to simultaneously continue and improve in 2027 means that FEPS will screen these Annual Activities and Flagship Programmes with attention to the potential increase of the involvement of the internal bodies (such as the renewed FEPS Scientific Council), as well as the network of experts from within the FEPS Communities.

Another key element for FEPS in 2027 will be to ensure that the profile of these activities, when it comes to design and desired outcomes, corresponds to the priorities set up within the Progressive movement. Following the conclusions of the GPM in Barcelona (in April 2026), as well as the debates within the S&D Group (on the choice of the key initiatives) and the PES, FEPS will pay close attention to choosing the leading themes for the FEPS Annual Activities and Flagship Programmes to ensure, where desirable, complementarity, and where called for – search for the new subjects that FEPS as a political foundation should be in a position to launch and promote.

FEPS Annual Activities allow for combining tradition and innovation. An example for the latter is the Policy Conference, introduced in 2024 and then maintained to be a base for progressive experts with a European focus. Also in 2024 an Analytical Conference was held first time by FEPS. A relaunch of this in the form of a “Research Conference” is now being considered (pertaining in particular the thematic chapters focusing on the Future of Social Democracy, Political Europe and Democracy).

Finally, as FEPS continues to be recognized for its solid competence and being a knowledge hub, for its organizational capacity and extensive network, and for its communication power, it is often invited to take part in external events. In 2026, the recurring invitations are being catalogued (also with a view

on their value versus budgetary implications), and FEPS will move to a more strategic approach, which will allow it to diversify between the participation and representation on the one hand, and taking on responsibility for one or more segments of the programme accompanying the initiative in question on the other hand. The latter builds on the practices of the years 2024 – 2026, whereby the modality that FEPS opted for, which is in accordance with the rules, is the fringe meetings.

IV.A Key Annual Public Events

FEPS considers the following reference point activities with refreshed content to be held in 2027:

Call to Europe | EU | spring and autumn

The *Call to Europe* conference has become FEPS successful signature event with the ambition to reach out to new audiences and bring the progressive debates on the EU into the countries holding the Council presidency. At its origin, it was designed to be a public event held in Brussels, but through reflection, the concept was developed, and the ambition remains to use the brand for organizing high-level conferences in the succession of presidency countries. The modality of these events includes, usually, a three-pillar agenda that features: a closed-door expert group meeting, a high-level dinner, and a public event (held usually on Saturday to enable the participation of the interested citizens). The event's competitive advantage is that while it brings a focus on the priorities of the respective EU presidency and the major pan-European debates of the given moment, it also provides a space for informed exchanges about what, from the European progressive perspective, these priorities should translate to and what other issues should be seen as complementary or further going, while at this stage considered missing. The size of the event means it brings together MEPs, MPs, academics, civil society, trade unions, and activists, often from the country of the EU Presidency and the neighboring region, and it is also frequently an opportunity for FEPS to highlight a topic it has been working on intensively. In 2027, FEPS is hoping to hold the events of this series in Lithuania and Greece, respectively.

The thematic field *Call to Europe* is connected directly with **Political Europe**, the choice of diversified prioritized topics dictates further affiliations and possible intersectionality.

Policy Conference | Brussels | autumn

At the beginning of autumn, FEPS is organizing an annual Policy Conference, which serves as a space for reviewing the EU policy agenda and an open-door debate for politicians, trade unions, civil society experts and academics. Each year, the event constitutes an excellent opportunity to promote FEPS' work on the leading questions pertaining to the future of the Union, and more specifically, the commitment to the Social Europe (understood in a broader sense – namely as a vision for the EU's integration trajectory). As the event takes place amid the preparations for the President of the European Commission's State of the Union address, as well as so called 'a la rentre' moment in the European Parliament, the conference has all the potential to raise key questions, provide further impulses and connect with the public on the most strategic matters. Traditionally, the Conference is organized in partnership with the offices of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Brussels.

The thematic field to which the Policy Conference is connected is: **Economy and Finances (lead)**, Social Europe, Environment and Climate, as well as Digital Europe.

Fringe programme at the 2nd Global Progressive Mobilisation | TBC | TBC

The first edition of the Global Progressive Mobilisation held in Barcelona, Spain in 2026 gathered together progressive forces – leaders, parties, think tanks, scholars trade unions, NGOs, activists from all around the world to engage in profoundly relevant conversations about the new global order, the key transformational challenges, and the political ideas that would ensure that the future is the one built on principles of peace and international law, democracy and solidarity, equality, sustainability and social progress for all. FEPS was heavily engaged providing a separate programme of 8 thematic exchanges and 3 training sessions back then. Pending the planning of the convenors for 2027, the intention is to keep building on the inspiring ideas from the first edition, as well as offer again an agenda of fringe events and hold an interactive stand. This will further advance FEPS' own work on complying with the responsibility of creating crossroads between academia and politics, as well as raising awareness about the EU-driven topics and offering spaces for citizens to discuss them.

UNITED FOR: Annual international conference organised on the fringe of the UN General Assembly | New York |

Following the agreements and the personal commitment of the UN Secretary-General António Guterres made to the FEPS delegation during the meeting on the 4th of May 2017, FEPS launched a new initiative entitled "UNited for". It comprises of an annual international conference, which starting from September 2018 was in New York on the fringe of the UN General Assembly. The intention is to continue, making the most effective use of the FEPS ECOSOC consultative status.

The thematic field UNITED FOR is connected with is: **Europe in the World**

13th Oxford Symposium | Oxford, UK | December

The Oxford Symposium (OS) was launched as a unique initiative, which gathers for 2 days programme leading politicians, most senior academics and experts from across the EU and the UK, to jointly deliberate on the most pertinent questions regarding the future of social democracy, internationalism in the global context, as well as the progressive principles for the European integration, the partnerships (as the one between the EU and the UK) and the most fundamental challenges of the given moment. Each edition has been devoted to a different focus, resulting in a publication featuring high-level authors and having been widely quoted. The partners behind are FEPS, supported by Progressive Britain (Progress) and the Karl-Renner-Institut, and events traditionally also benefit from a broad recognition and support of the networks of the EU-national scholars, who lecture and conduct research in the UK. While most FEPS activities prioritise intra-EU participation, the OS functions as a bridge between social democratic thinkers and leaders of the EU and the UK.

The thematic field to which OS is connected with is: **Future of Social Democracy** and its flagship programme "Next Left".

See details in Chapter III.B.

IV.B FEPS immersion programmes

In 2020-2026, FEPS has tested a Traineeship Programme and a Visiting Fellowship Programme. The continuation of these depend on the semi-annual assessment of needs, opportunities and resources.

FEPS Visiting Fellowship Programme | Throughout the year

FEPS is committed to reinforcing its linkages with academia in order to provide valuable policy research and analysis that can instruct and inspire progressive policy-making. To this end, in 2021 FEPS launched a new Visiting Fellowship Programme to give the opportunity to PhD candidates and Post-Docs, as also the established researchers and experienced stakeholders to contribute to the strategic priorities outlined in the present FAP and bring in fresh thinking and frontier methods in crucial policy areas. The Programme has been put on hold due to the budgetary constraints, but it remains an objective of FEPS to try and revive it. The Visiting Fellows work on a research plan that fits with FEPS priorities and projects and will be carried out under the supervision of the Secretary General, in collaboration with the relevant FEPS Director and Policy Analysts.

FEPS Trainees Programme | Throughout the year

In an attempt to provide learning opportunities, and to develop in-house research assistance and logistic support capacity, FEPS has opened a traineeship programme that enables young progressives from across the EU to join the FEPS team with a clear educational objective. The learning content of the programme is well-defined in advance (before the chosen trainee starts his or her tenure). With a semi-annual regularity, FEPS intends to make this programme's design a proud example of how longer-term political trainings can be organised with an absolute respect to equal treatment and highest labour standards as principles. Trainees can be assigned to follow projects and work on specific activities and publications (i.e., Newsletter, PYB), as well as being delegated to work on one specific thematic field (as was the case for the Climate and Environment in 2026). FEPS wishes to continue offering this opportunity, the opening of which, provided resources allow. FEPS believes that they are excellent ways to involve young progressive aspiring professionals directly, and hence, they also have to be run in an exemplary way, ensuring that the learning and training are well structured, that Trainees are offered comprehensive guidance, as well as remunerated in accordance with the principles of quality jobs.

V. | FEPS COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

V.A FEPS Communications

Communication is key to channelling all the complex content-related work towards office holders, experts, activists, and the broader European audience. Part of this work is to translate FEPS' output into formats that are digestible for experts and the general public, ensuring external outreach and consolidation of the FEPS profile. As in other parts of our activities, innovation and creative thinking are needed to make the desired effect.

In 2027, there will be a review of the FEPS Communication Strategy adopted by the General Assembly in June 2020. The 2020 Strategy has been consequently and successfully implemented and remains a valid compass for enhancing visual identity, reinforcing branding, introducing pioneering and engaging communication tools, and expanding audiences. Beyond an evaluation of achievements and a drive for further acceleration, the strong emphasis will be on the changing context in which FEPS operates and on how to navigate it while articulating progressive content, as well as on setting new criteria for the impact assessment.

Strategising and planning

FEPS communication is an integral part of FEPS' work. It is to ensure the flow of information in 3 key functions:

- 1./ promoting FEPS output (research outcomes, events etc.)
- 2./ responding to major EU developments (high level meetings, decisions, elections, initiatives etc.), and
- 3./ remaining in interactive relationship with our core and peripheral audiences.

In all three functions there is an organic link between what is being researched, debated and organised on the one hand and what is being published, disseminated and communicated about on the other. By definition, ambitious strategising and consistent planning on communications ensure a robust performance. FEPS Communication Team continues working on:

- Long, mid and short-term communications plans with clear priorities and attention to which FEPS communications tools best match the respective products.
- A holistic approach to FEPS's work, which calls for the communications dimension to be included as an integral part of the activity's development from inception to closing.
- Predictability and synergies are key to maximising the lifespan and cross-promotion opportunities of FEPS materials. Following the conclusions of the Strategic Seminar 2026, more attention will also be paid to ways the same products can be re-promoted – either in a repackaged format or simply through links to opportunities other than the original ones.
- Ability to respond to unforeseeable relevant developments, which is a necessity for a European political foundation. Together with the relentless attention that the communication team devotes to current affairs, this agility has been reinforced by quick reactions, ad hoc commentaries and posts. This has been made possible by the participation of both the leadership and the entire FEPS team. The ways to continue will be further explored, with particular attention to the impact of these comments and to fine-tuning their formats.
- Expanding the connections with the journalists and the representatives.

- Exploring needs and reserve opportunities in multilingualism.

FEPS on Social Media

Social media is an ever-changing landscape and adapting to new trends and challenges whilst building an online community of followers who engage with FEPS at all stages of the communications ecosystem is central to our work. In 2027, the strategic direction of FEPS' social media output will reflect wider trends to remain one of the leading, innovative political foundations in this field, while also aiming to create community and share reliable, evidence-based information and research with EU citizens and beyond.

FEPS has significantly expanded its outreach across all social media platforms, including *LinkedIn*, *Twitter*, *Facebook*, *Instagram* and *YouTube*. Two new accounts have recently been created: *BlueSky* and *TikTok*, in response to major shifts in user behaviour on social media platforms, particularly a significant decline in the use of X and the mainstreaming of short-form video content.

In 2027, the communications team will continue to adapt its use of social media, based on empirical evidence from our communication reports, for tailored targeting.

Improved strategy and planning have helped better balance the distribution of posts and enhance our social presence, given the volume and diversity of content FEPS must promote digitally. By tailoring the content to each platform's specific needs, tone and format, FEPS effectively engages diverse audiences with content produced through the numerous activities in which FEPS is involved.

The numbers continue to be on FEPS' side, reflecting the significant effort invested in social media, the readiness to respond to algorithmic trends, and our ongoing improvements in both format and content. The social media strategy is rooted in our delivery and growth in previous years.

Since 2023, *LinkedIn*'s growth has increased by 256.29%. In 2025, it experienced phenomenal growth, which then steadied but remained high at 25.29%. It averaged around 40 followers per day, above the industry standard.

Producing more short, direct videos highlighting FEPS' events, podcasts, and other activities is now a stable part of the FEPS Communications team's regular work, particularly on *YouTube Shorts* and *Instagram Reels*.

On X, despite the follower losses that every other political foundation experienced following Elon Musk's takeover, FEPS' engagement and audience have remained fairly stable. In 2027, the use of the platform will be revised in accordance with industry practices.

After a period of stagnation, FEPS' *Facebook* saw slight growth in followers, indicating there is still a core audience we must maintain engagement with, especially in specific EU countries.

Events coverage & audiovisual capacity

Events are a key element of FEPS' communications. Following the path initiated in 2020, synergies among events, publications and other core activities and deliverables will continue to be reinforced together with the EU policy cycle. As part of the new Directorship of Communications and Events, an

Events Review will be conducted to examine aspects such as overall strategy, impact and target audiences; date sequencing; synergies among portfolios; location, communication coverage; innovations; audience engagement; workload spread; service providers; definition of ex-ante assessment and ex-post evaluation criteria; and the redefinition of flagship events.

To adapt to an increasingly video-oriented environment, FEPS will continue to improve its audiovisual capabilities and innovate, as it has over the last few years. Recent and upcoming additions also reflect the shift in social media language towards short, video-based content.

FEPS' takes pride in the quality of its audiovisual output, which continues to become more professional every year. FEPS' public events are systematically recorded (streamed when justified) to the highest standard. We count on a well-established system, with new webcams which allow different camera positions and a wider range of setups depending.

To improve engagement and accessibility, long sessions are increasingly edited into shorter standalone videos of around 25–30 minutes, helping audiences navigate key moments more easily. In addition, a new line of on-the-spot short videos -during events or immediately afterwards- has made it easier to capture insights and reactions in a dynamic, accessible format.

Selected events are now also available on *Spotify*, complementing their video presence on *YouTube* and making content accessible across more platforms. *YouTube* has become not only a live-streaming platform but also a well-organised and appealing audiovisual archive.

In addition, FEPS is increasing its production of short-form content (reels and shorts) from event footage—an approach we aim to further develop in 2027 to increase reach and visibility across social media platforms. The idea behind these videos goes beyond the technical aspects; it's about creating more appealing and fresh content while maintaining FEPS' academic rigour and political commitment.

In 2027, FEPS will continue to be innovative in event coverage, both online and offline, by adapting to industry trends while tailoring to evidence from FEPS' previous events. Short-form videos with key high-level speakers will continue to be prioritised as a format of promoting larger events, but also as a means of repromotion our content across different audiences and multiplying our coverage.

FEPS Podcast – FEPS Talks

The FEPS Talks podcast continued to evolve, building on the previous year's revamp. To increase both reach and engagement, several new features have been introduced across production, content, and promotion.

In terms of content, FEPS Talks is becoming a more pedagogical podcast—committed to making complex policy debates accessible and engaging for general audiences. Looking ahead to 2027, we are exploring hybrid formats that combine in-studio hosts with online guests, while continuing to expand our use of short-form content—reels and shorts that spotlight the most compelling moments from each episode. This approach has already proven its value as our primary promotional tool for podcasts, with several clips becoming our strongest-performing content on Instagram and YouTube Shorts.

FEPS' studio also experienced several improvements, such as the lighting setup, giving video episodes a more polished and professional look. The studio can now welcome two to three guests recording at once, allowing for livelier and more spontaneous exchanges. Full video versions are now also available on Spotify, expanding access across platforms.

FEPS Newsletters

FEPS' metrics demonstrate notable success, boasting an open rate of 41.9% (compared to the 31.8% average) and a click rate of 3.3% (surpassing the 1.5% average). Numbers have improved steadily in recent years, in line with continuous improvements. Following a notable shift toward more thematically focused newsletters, we will continue strengthening the relevance of our content by tying it closely to current affairs, often through timely commentaries from our colleagues that help create this clear link.

Both the FEPS and Progressive Post newsletters – which share updates on new publications, articles, upcoming and past events and other relevant activities – are planned weeks or even months in advance. That said, the content still requires a degree of flexibility and adaptability to remain responsive to emerging developments.

FEPS continues to enhance the newsletters' visual appearance, performance and user experience on a new platform that offers better mobile responsiveness and expanded customisation and design options. The publication day was changed to improve open and click rates. To make them more appealing, text was reduced in favour of more visual elements. A personalised event registration tool was also introduced on the website, simplifying the subscription process.

To continue growing our subscriber base, we plan to gather readers' feedback in 2027. The aim is to optimise the newsletter as much as possible, in line with readers' preferences.

Visual identity

FEPS continues to strengthen its brand, ensuring it remains distinctive, attractive, and recognisable to target audiences. While maintaining consistency with our graphic charter, we will continue innovating to keep FEPS' visual identity fresh and engaging, and we will find new ways to optimise FEPS' branding across the various event formats, whether in-person or online.

Recognising the value of both digital and traditional communication tools, we enhanced our visual identity across all formats. We now systematically produce flyers and posters to promote FEPS events and publications, take care of the presentation of our Library at the FEPS office and explore new ways to enhance content visibility, including updated publication displays.

Website

Launched in 2022, the integrated FEPS website was designed to be our virtual headquarters. Visitors can navigate a dynamic space featuring our activities, 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.

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

In 2027, FEPS will conduct a Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) analysis and update its code to improve both the readability of its content for search engine crawlers and the website's speed.

Media partnerships & external promotion

Establishing and maintaining a strong network of journalists is a long-term, ongoing task. Cooperation with member foundations in this field remains crucial to disseminating FEPS' intellectual work beyond the traditional EU bubble audience.

In the last year, quick, fresh reactions to current affairs have been further reinforced by the entire team's participation. This is essential to capturing the media's attention, as the media are generally more interested in the expertise of FEPS' leadership, team, and in-house knowledge bank rather than in our specific activities.

As part of the Communications Strategy, ensuring media presence of FEPS' experts and work will remain a priority. As an example of the increasing presence in EU and national media, in 2025, FEPS' leadership, team members and activities were featured in more than 60 media outlets across Europe, including *Euronews*, *Politico*, *The Parliament Magazine*, *Euractiv* and national outlets such as *Le Monde*, *France 24* and *The Guardian*.

FEPS maintains some commercial partnerships with influential EU affairs media outlets. Additional partnerships with other EU media will be explored.

Network: member foundations and the progressive family

The FEPS member foundations and the other members of the overall progressive family are key natural allies. Strengthening cooperation in communication and media remains a strategic priority.

In 2027, the communications team will continue to work closely with colleagues in the progressive family via multiple channels and collaborate more effectively with publications and events to integrate promotion across the progressive ecosystem.

V.B FEPS publications

FEPS publications

Through sustained effort in recent years, FEPS has developed a strong and consistent output of annual, periodical and occasional publications, which are now recognised as established and reputable FEPS brands. The editorial process for its policy briefs, policy studies and books has undergone significant streamlining and systematisation, demonstrating a commitment to achieving professional publishing standards.

In 2027, a Publications Review is to be conducted to assess impact and potential changes to the production and dissemination strategy, looking into aspects such as publication categories, internal workflow, external providers, accessibility, AI integration and printing policy. The aim is to innovate but also to ensure optimal planning for better matching our objectives with resources and optimise efficiently at the same time.

FEPS Policy Briefs and Policy Studies

To effectively disseminate research findings and critical analyses of key contemporary issues, accompanied by clear policy recommendations, FEPS offers two distinct yet complementary publication series for both specialised and wider audiences. Policy Briefs provide concise and timely analyses primarily aimed at European and national decision-makers and administrators. Policy Studies offer in-depth, research-based examinations of policies, policy processes and their impact on the EU and European societies. While maintaining a unified visual identity, these publications differ in format and have proven invaluable in promoting the outcomes of FEPS initiatives and informing numerous events.

FEPS Book Series

Since 2022, FEPS has been collaborating with the London Publishing Partnership and Dietz Verlag, in addition to its existing partnership with ASPRA. This cooperation ensures high-quality editorial products and reliable inputs for our programmes. Furthermore, the market availability of all printed books (except the Progressive Yearbook) also supports our quality control efforts. A timely review of existing partnerships aims at optimising quality presentation, outreach and resources. And will also then result in the new call for tenders.

FEPS Primers Series

This item is a cross-cutting point between the publications' chapter and the section that refers to the FEPS Training Programme, as the primers remain a collection of educational books that FEPS is publishing with a target to inform about the specific European policy areas, and then raise awareness and contribute indirectly to raising the standards of the debate on the Future of Europe from a progressive perspective.

The Progressive Post

The Progressive Post, the flagship quarterly magazine from FEPS, delivers a distinct progressive take on the European Union's role in a rapidly changing world. Available in print and online, it features insightful articles that dissect the complexities of current EU debates. Every issue is built around comprehensive dossiers that provide a deep dive into crucial European and global challenges. It also features compelling interviews, critical reviews of books and movies and sharp editorials from top progressive thinkers, including lawmakers, academics and experts. Beyond its original English version, The Progressive Post has partnered with member foundations' magazines to translate its content into other languages, including Czech, Italian and Spanish, ensuring its progressive message resonates across the EU.

The Progressive Post newsletter

To keep its audience informed and engaged, The Progressive Post sends out a weekly newsletter packed with progressive content. Each edition rotates between four types of features: Progressive Pages, offering sharp analysis of key political developments in Europe and authored by the FEPS President, Secretary General and a growing network of influential guest contributors; Dossiers,

providing in-depth progressive evaluations of European and international topics through focused collections of three to four articles; the European Progressive Observatory, which provides essential electoral analysis; and Progressive Reads and Views, which offers thoughtful reviews of new books and movies relevant to progressive ideas.

Progressive Yearbook

The Progressive Yearbook (PYB) is a well-established publication eagerly awaited by European progressives, as demonstrated by the seventh volume published in January 2026. FEPS will continue to develop this key publication in 2027 and beyond. The PYB will continue to offer a valuable instrument for interpreting the past year and discerning future trends, featuring its established sections on the previous year's developments, predictions for the coming year, insightful case studies on relevant national contexts and an interview with the Progressive Person of the Year.

Annex 1: FORESEEN CONTENT OF THEMATIC CHAPTERS

1. **SOCIAL EUROPE** – developing new ideas and proposing a new socio-economic agenda, centered around the social dimension of European sovereignty, while further advancing the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, ensuring access to affordable and quality housing, contributing to the eradication of poverty and homelessness, consolidating a Health Union, as well as promoting, i.e. social investment within the new MFF.

Fighting for “Social Europe” is the number one priority for the progressive movement. The current geopolitical rifts, bringing wars and a cost-of-living crisis, have made everyday people – not the big corporations and the authoritarian actors behind or profiting from those troubles - the first victims. Furthermore, decades of neoliberal economic policies have contributed to increasing inequalities across Europe.

Therefore, addressing affordability, the cost-of-living crisis, and all in all improving quality of life and work must drive our political action. We must reclaim what is essential in our society: ensuring well-being and empowerment for all. This goes in line with the commitment of the GPM, the strategic turn of the S&D, and the priorities of the PES for the EU’s next MFF.

The current approach of the European Commission on competitiveness and deregulation has gone in the wrong direction, also threatening the social dimension. However, the leadership of progressive Commissioners has course-corrected this, with initiatives to fight poverty, ensure access to affordable housing and improve the quality of jobs.

As the EU works to build its strategic autonomy, FEPS has been proposing a new socio-economic agenda, centred around the social dimension of European sovereignty. In 2027, the European Pillar of Social Rights will turn 10. It will be the moment to reaffirm our commitment to Social Europe, while coming up with a new horizon for social rights, and new ideas for work, wellbeing, healthcare, education as well as public goods and services.

“Social Europe” stands at the intersection of FEPS political priorities for 2027, as the need for a fair digital transition, a new development model, and a new societal vision must be framed around social justice, equality and the well-being of all people and the planet. Impact will rely on good cooperation with relevant portfolios, such as the economy, digital, and environment.

Affirming European sovereignty through its social dimension

The current debate on European sovereignty, notably triggered by the political rupture with the United States, has been mainly framed in a reactionary manner, focusing on dependencies in the fields of defence, energy and broader industrial capacities. However, Europe can count on a major asset: its social model.

Building on its “Porto 2.0” initiative, FEPS will continue to shape and advance its new social agenda as the foundation of European sovereignty. With the European Pillar of Social Rights turning 10 in 2027, FEPS will keep working on quality jobs, the fight against poverty, lifelong learning opportunities, and

the care sector. The provision of public services and the promotion of social investment should also frame FEPS work on the next Multiannual Financial Framework. This will provide the progressive movement with a solid and forward-looking set of proposals in view of the 2029 European elections.

Ensuring Affordable Housing in Europe

Putting the housing issue on the European agenda has been one of the major achievements of social democrats for this term. With the Affordable Housing Plan and Act being rolled out, ensuring its progressive framing and dedicated funding in the next Multiannual Financial Framework are a priority for our political family.

FEPS has developed extensive expertise in the matter. FEPS will continue with its “Housing in Practice” initiative, bringing together local, regional, national and European policymakers, experts, and practitioners to better connect European housing initiatives with territorial realities. In addition, FEPS will further explore ways to expand our knowledge bank on housing and develop new policy proposals for our political family.

Developing the European Health Union

More than five years after the COVID-19 pandemic, not all the lessons have been learned. Amid the crisis, many announcements were made. The commitment to build a European Health Union is largely unachieved. As health policy remains a national competence, there is an opportunity to bring it to the European agenda, as with housing, and deliver concrete results to citizens.

Building on its work on mental health and existing knowledge in the field of health policy cooperation at the European level, FEPS will continue to develop a comprehensive and inclusive approach to healthcare, notably in cooperation with the S&D group. This should look into cross-border cooperation, investment in infrastructures and human capital, demographic change, and linkages with broader societal issues, such as the transformation of the world of work or the climate crisis.

Advancing new ideas for Social Europe

In addition to the work on the immediate political priorities, the promise of a more “Social Europe” must also go beyond protecting the acquis. As a think tank and hub for ideas, FEPS must present a forward-looking agenda.

Therefore, FEPS should start working on the new horizons of social rights in Europe, anticipating trends and further developing its understanding of the situation in Member States. For example, FEPS could explore questions such as the new relationship to work, the future of education, and the provision of public services. Overall, FEPS should provide the space to discuss and test new ideas for well-being in transforming societies.

2. **ECONOMY AND FINANCE** – designing a resilient and sustainable economic development model, to forge policy proposals towards a job-rich and clean industrial policy, European fiscal capacity and fair taxation to support the innovative, fair, competitive and productive economy, and scaling up of economic democracy, aiming at an EU-wide prosperity plan with a broad appeal.

The European Union's economy faces challenges on several fronts. The unraveling of global economic cooperation and the weaponization of economic relations have put the EU in an uneasy position. From the progressive standpoint, it is clear that maintaining the status quo is impossible, and the EU needs to become much more strategic in its economic policy, which requires changes in how EU policies are made. This concerns, first of all, industrial policies, which saw a renaissance in recent years. It needs to become more focused, more ambitious and better governed in order to support the (re-) industrialization, sustainability and resilience. The second major challenge is the increasing gap in tech and digital fields compared to major global players. It undermines EU competitiveness as well as its sovereignty and security. The third challenge is the increasing volatility of the economic, political and environmental conditions. The shocks are becoming more frequent and call for better risk management and crisis preparedness. The outbreak of the war in the Middle East has again shown the precariousness of dependence on foreign energy supplies and calls for a faster green transition, but also for better crisis preparedness, and in particular, better inflation preparedness. All this comes on top of the necessity to provide for essential needs – housing, human capital, good jobs and health, all of which have increasingly come under strain in recent years. To that end, the EU finds it difficult to finance these needs and priorities in the current fiscal framework. The European Commission's proposed solution was a reform of MFF, with the proposed budget reshuffle trying to support European competitiveness. But the use of the available resources is far below the needs.

To address these challenges, the fixes to the current economic frameworks are insufficient. More transformative solutions are needed, with more European solutions, more resources, more democracy and a bigger role for the active state.

Drafting a Prosperity Plan for Europe

In line with FEPS 2027 annual priority 2, the "Economy and Finance" portfolio will dedicate substantial capacity to developing the new development model for Europe. The main project in this domain will be a Prosperity Plan for Europe (working title), to be implemented jointly with Green European Foundation. The aim is to elaborate a new, progressive vision for the European economy that goes beyond the fixes of the current failed model and proposes a breakthrough grounded in progressive values. Connecting economic performance with objectives of social rights and and environmental sustainability, and reconciling market integration with territorial cohesion will be of particular interest. The initiative will be combined with an intensive communications campaign to generate resonance and political uptake. In particular, the Prosperity Plan will be featured at the FEPS Policy Conference in September 2027 (p. 34). Deliberations on these forward-looking transformative policies will also be done in cooperation with S&D to support their flagship initiatives and the foresight exercise, launched in June 2026.

Evaluating the European budget and identifying new sources of financing for European priorities

This topic is tied to the ongoing negotiations on the EU budget (MFF), which shall be finalised at the end of 2026. Thus, the focus of FEPS work is intended to be broader to encompass evaluation on the implementation, as well as the debates on non-budgetary means of financing industrial policy. Subsequent focus will be on financing the scale-up of innovation eco-systems – the topic we already started working on in 2026. Europe's sub-par record on scaling up innovation is widely believed to be the major drag on its competitiveness, but also increasingly economic and hard security, as it finds

itself dependent on digital solutions from elsewhere. This work will contribute to the discussions about the EU budget (MFF), notably on the Competitiveness Fund, but will also feed into several other ongoing policy discussions on industrial policy and competitiveness.

Unleashing an ambitious industrial policy

European industrial policy continues to be at the center of policy debate. Now, on top of the competitiveness angle, the security and sovereignty dimension is taking on more significance. Consequently, FEPS plans to focus in particular on the governance of industrial policy and on institutional arrangements, as these are major obstacles to its effectiveness in the EU. Due to a lack of EU central fiscal capacity and decentralized decision-making, there are a range of limitations on the range of available tools, effectiveness and scale of European industrial policies. As a result, the EU finds it difficult to pursue the large-scale ambitious industrial policies of the kind the US and China are doing. FEPS would like to explore how governance of EU industrial policy can be modified to increase its ambition, strategic orientation and scale. The issue of multi-level nature of the EU industrial policy also needs to be addressed. FEPS sees that place-based industrial policy plays a key role in regional development and cohesion.

Pursuing economic democracy

The democratization of the economy is the main instrument to achieve well-being for all. It involves the transfer of decision-making power in the economic domain to people: at the workplace, in local communities, but also at higher levels of economic policy. It will give people back the sense of agency - the power over their own life and that of their collectives/communities and countries – and will also lead to better and fairer economic outcomes. For 2027, FEPS plans to continue focusing on employee ownership, but might also explore other fields of economic democracy. The work will include both analysis and policy contributions, but also engaging with stakeholders in diverse European countries, which should help build momentum for wider adoption of employee ownership and economic democracy more broadly. As such, the outcomes will make a profound contribution to accomplishing FAP 2027 priorities 2 and 3.

3. **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.

Digital technology continues to be an important topic at all levels of governance. While the previous mandate was characterised by legislation, we now see a movement towards implementation, enforcement, simplification, and investment. The existing body of digital legislation is increasingly under pressure from foreign and EU governments, the private sector and other stakeholders, with the various omnibus procedures representing a clear threat to the regulatory power of the EU and undermining long-term legal certainty that economic actors need to flourish.

Meanwhile, the EU is rolling out its plans to develop its own technological capabilities, driven in part by geopolitical challenges and concerns about competitiveness and future prosperity. AI, cloud, data

centers and compute are central, yet these power- and resource-intensive technologies and infrastructure pose a risk to the bloc's green ambitions. AI is also expected to massively impact labour markets, putting further stress on already strained social security systems and raising important questions about the distribution of the benefits and burdens of these new technological developments. The regulation of platforms and their responsibility vis-à-vis minors remains an important topic, with the EU choosing the path of introducing a digital minimum age.

Given this context, progressives need to unite now to shape the EU's digital future, putting workers' rights, sustainability, social justice, privacy, and public interest at the centre. And this mission should stand at the core, being a cross-cutting set of tasks along all the 3 annual priorities identified in this year's FAP.

Framing a compelling, centre-left narrative on digitalisation

AI and digitalisation are reshaping work, public services and daily life faster than most political narratives can keep pace with. If progressives cede this ground to techno-optimist deregulation on one side and reactionary fear on the other, they lose both the argument and the voters who are most unsettled by change. Electorally, a confident, future-facing story wins over younger, digitally engaged citizens while reassuring workers that automation can be shaped in their interest, not simply endured.

Ideologically, steering technological transformation to serve working people, not capital alone, connects to the roots of social democracy. A narrative built on fair distribution of AI's gains, the dignity of work and democratic oversight of technology, paired with genuine optimism about its possibilities, allow centre-left politicians to seize the moment as the political force able to provide fair, stable and prosperous future instead of reacting negatively to new developments.

Yet, such a narrative is currently lacking within our movement, which calls for an orchestrated effort to create a blueprint that can be further developed by politicians at the European, national, regional and local levels.

Linking digital and sustainable

Progressives are leaders in fighting for a greener and more sustainable EU. However, the environmental impacts of data-, energy- and compute-intense technologies such as AI remain largely unaddressed. Tensions around the development of data centres across the EU highlight how digital is increasingly pulled into political discussions around and competition for scarce resources such as (clean) electricity, water, land and critical raw materials, raising urgent questions about who claims the benefits and who carries the burdens. The increasing use of AI risks canceling out any emissions reduction that could be achieved through renewable energy and energy efficiency in the digital sector, and becoming a new significant source of emissions throughout the world. Aiming for strategic autonomy and geopolitical considerations add a further layer to the issue.

Considering current trends, these discussions will only intensify. It is therefore crucial that progressives can provide clear solutions that balance the economic and social utility of digital technologies with their resource use and planetary boundaries, as well as the needs of communities.

Putting AI at the service of our societies

We continue to witness the rapid spread of AI across the European economy and society, with the consequences also becoming increasingly tangible across areas like the labour market, the information ecosystem and election integrity, sustainability, education, public services and so on. It also shines light on the unseen accumulation of power and capital in the hands of a small group of ‘broligarchs’ while leading to the (further) disenfranchisement of labor across the globe.

The way AI is developed, who develops it and the way it used deserve our continued attention, as without intervention, this technology and the way it impacts us will not develop in a positive direction.

Empowering technical professionals and students as progressive voices

Technical students and professionals in the digital sphere (e.g. computer, data and AI scientists) enjoy an authoritative position in debates around digitalisation and by virtue of their technical expertise belong to a small group of people who are able exercise a strong normative influence on the development and deployment of technologies. Yet, these stakeholders are often underrepresented in policy debates and relatively little attention is devoted to the socio-political dimensions of technology in their studies.

By developing an educational dimension of FEPS work (within crosscutting with the Thematic Field of Training) targeting these individuals, we can empower them to be active participants in the debates concerning digitalization, speaking out in favor of ethical, human-centric technology.

Ensuring that the digital transformation happens in line with the European values

The recent years have made painfully clear how dependent the EU has become on US and to a lesser degree on China when it comes to digital technologies. While consensus exists around the need to reverse this situation, the path to sovereignty is one shaped by several economic and political considerations, such as which investments are prioritized and what financial instruments are used. Furthermore, it touches upon other key issues like public procurement, digital taxation, developing digital public infrastructure, competition (e.g. in cloud and AI markets) and public-private cooperation.

For progressives, sovereignty is a fundamental precondition for ensuring that digitalization happens in line with European values. It is therefore crucial that we collect and highlight existing best practices and present a clear and feasible roadmap towards digital sovereignty that considers the domestic conditions across member states and the EU’s governance structure and is built on progressive values like the respect of fundamental rights and empowering workers.

4. **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, support adaptation and mitigation measures, create new clean jobs and mainstream climate and ecological objectives in European policies.

Climate change and biodiversity loss constitute existential threats to human beings. The heat waves and wildfires from the summer of 2026 are only a preview of what awaits us in the next decade.

Current climate action in the EU and internationally is insufficient to keep climate change at a safe level, avoid accelerated human-induced species losses, and safely adapt to the impacts of climate change. Without a safe and stable climate and the ecosystems services provided by a rich biodiversity, any effort and progress in human rights, social protection and economic wellbeing will be jeopardised.

All climate and environmental policies must be expanded to achieve a societal transformation, rather than implement timid changes and create uncertainty through recurring policy changes. Progressives need to stand ahead of the curve by changing with intention, rather than reacting haphazardly. However, climate action and environmental protection are both facing increasing opposition and rollback from right-wing political parties, mostly on the grounds of baseless affirmations and outright disinformation. Stuck in a “business as usual” mindset and protecting the economic interests of a few, such political positions deny the opportunities from a just transition towards climate neutrality in terms of industrial competitiveness, strategic autonomy, health and peace. This situation threatens the well-being of European citizens, undermines democracy and diminishes the legitimacy and influence of the EU on the international stage.

The European progressive family must remain committed to implementing the European Green Deal and go further to uphold international climate agreements and science. To do so, FEPS will work on two main objectives in 2027. First, it will build on activities from 2026, continue producing studies and feed discussions on industrial decarbonization, clean technologies and transformative adaptation, key aspects of climate action. And secondly, it will deliver work on enablers to climate action, that is, transversal elements that allow for informed policy discussions, democratic processes and public support. In 2027, the focus will be on climate communication and the use of scientific knowledge for evidence-based climate policy-making. These two angles will contribute especially to the achievement of Priority 2 of this year’s FAP.

Focusing on industry decarbonisation and clean technology development

The EU is slowly progressing in the design and implementation of industrial decarbonization and green-led market policies. Following the Clean Industrial Deal, the Industrial Accelerator Act (IAA) was adopted in 2026, and it will require more debates and decisions for an effective and impactful implementation. The IAA marks the beginning of a paradigm shift towards a more directive governmental action that seeks to shape markets to achieve a decarbonised, competitive and strategically autonomous Europe. This trend must continue while better taking into account regional differences and European cohesion. The EU must also “de-silo” its industrial policies and improve overall policy coherence by better integrating both social and environmental dimensions.

Pursuing transformative adaptation for all

The new European Climate Adaptation Plan (ECAP) is announced for the second half of 2026. While this is anticipated to be a positive development to better protect human lives, biodiversity and the economy, it is only the first step in acknowledging how unprepared the EU is to face climate change impacts. A deep policy process is necessary to go beyond small incremental adaptive actions and design transformative adaptation policies that proactively address climate risks, instead of reactively coping with disasters. It will not be an easy exercise to find the right balance between a European vision and the context-specific nature of adaptation and to reach the most vulnerable groups.

Designing climate communication and fighting disinformation

Communicating on climate change and climate-related policies is a difficult but necessary endeavor to raise awareness on the necessity of climate action, to build public support and, thereby, legitimize policies and strengthen their implementation. Recent waves of green backlash, difficulties in explaining complex issues in an interconnected world and rampant disinformation constitute only a few of the challenges faced by progressive policy-makers. This is why it is important to use the best available work on climate communication to reframe climate messages in a way that appeals to a broad audience. The precise topics to address will be linked to the S&D flagships and other emerging priorities.

Providing a transmission belt between science for climate policy and progressive politics

Climate-related policies are becoming increasingly complex as they advance. Reducing emissions may be simple for some isolated industries, but decarbonizing entire systems, such as housing, transport and food, will require complex systemic transformations encompassing a wide array of policy areas. Sciences, from chemistry and engineering to social sciences and psychology, offer a wealth of evidence-based knowledge, concepts and ideas to inform policies, learn from the past, identify best practices and achieve those transformations. Ensuring that the best scientific evidence and ideas are effectively used in climate and environmental policy-making is a continuous effort that requires constantly renewing and developing collaborations and exchanges with academia. The precise topics to address can be linked to the S&D flagships and other emerging priorities.

5. **EUROPE IN THE WORLD** – focusing on the EU's role in striving for peace, human security and sustainable development in a new multipolar global order, as well as relations with strategic partners in diverse formats of alliances, partnerships and neighbourhood policies. Responding to conflicts and global imbalances are key questions, at a time when the EU is also building a stronger defense profile.

The Barcelona GPM in spring 2026 showcased to the world the progressive forces' capability to mobilise when they come together. Following its spirit, the international portfolio will continue strengthening alliances with like-minded partners around the world promoting effective cooperation, respect for international law and global solidarity.

Against a turbulent geopolitical backdrop, where international norms are violated daily and multilateral institutions are increasingly challenged, the EU must re-ignite its unwavering commitment to international law and multilateral institutions. To do so, the EU needs to leave behind double standards and inconsistent condemnations of illegal use of force, regardless of the perpetrator. This is a core component of the EU's strategic autonomy. The EU must define itself independently of the US and China and put forward its own vision based on values and legal principles. It should make full use of its unique tools, from its economic influence – being the largest market in the world – to its diplomatic capacity. The European Union and its Member States have historically been at the forefront of multilateralism and key diplomatic initiative, such as the Iran Nuclear Deal, and the EU is the largest development and humanitarian donor. The EU must also have its own defence strategy

guided by international law, restraint and peaceful resolution of conflicts, serving the interest of European people rather than private companies.

FEPS's work can shape this mission through sustained dialogue with progressive forces around the world, as well as by articulating clear proposals to uphold international solidarity and rule of law, i.e., through the reform of multilateral institutions and by building ad hoc coalitions of the willing. As such, this work will be pivotal to accomplishing the tasks set out, especially within Priority 2.

Continuing strategic dialogue with progressive international allies

As the EU aims to advance in its own strategic autonomy at all fronts, it requires strong alliances with partners around the world. FEPS will continue promoting strategic dialogues with progressive allies to enhance understanding and promote agreements on key issues, from reforming multilateral institutions and trade to supporting green industrialisation and digital sovereignty. In all these forums, FEPS will promote a framework of co-creation with alliances based on mutual interest and respect.

This issue will include continuing to strengthen EU progressive's relations with the Global South through the FEPS led EU-Africa Progressive Network as well as the biennial S&D Latin American Days. It will also include the Progressive Platform of International Development, a forum that uses the Global Gateway as the main testing ground for new models of cooperation between EU and the Global South.

Leading the re-commitment to International Law

In the face of blatant violation of the basic principles of international law, in particular of the norms related to the use of force and the UN Charter, progressive forces must unequivocally uphold these principles and a multilateralism based on the respect of international law. The EU to stand up to call out where violations are being committed and to be at the forefront of the recommitment to the Geneva conventions.

As part of this work, FEPS will formulate practical recommendations to strengthen compliance of international law, in particular in support of IHL and the Rome Statute, defend the authority and the work of the courts, i.e. ICC and ICJ, as well as support and defending the NGOs that document these crimes and advocate for accountability for the most outrageous crimes against humanity and the planet.

Putting forward a Progressive Peace and Security vision for the European Union

As the EU places an increasing emphasis on defense, progressives must put forward a vision of peace and security that goes beyond simply increasing defense spending. An EU defence agenda requires autonomous capabilities, while putting conflict prevention and respect of international law at the centre. Hence, a long-term progressive strategy for the EU's security should understand security in broader terms, including military, technological, energetic and climate security..

Drawing on the UN Women Peace and Security Agenda, the FEPS FFPPVC will articulate a progressive vision of security that places human security at the centre. Moreover, FEPS research will focus on a EU military industry whose output is European, that is EU regulated and at the service of public interest and not private profit.

Designing a more strategic EU approach to geo-economics

President Trump's second mandate has made even clearer how economics, from the weaponisation of tariffs or sea channels to the competition over supply chains, shape global politics. The formulation of adequate strategies to these dynamics requires a deeper examination of the intersection between economics and geopolitics, particularly in critical areas such as EU's position in the global competition for energy security or access to critical raw materials. It also means analysing how geo-economic interests shape and often fuel armed conflict around the world, from Ukraine to Sudan to Venezuela.

Another fundamental arena through which geoeconomic power is exercised is international financial institutions. Their current governance is heavily favorable towards developed countries, prompting developing countries to justly claim reform. By leveraging its financial and diplomatic weight, the EU could support these efforts to strengthen its alliance with developing partners and promote a more cooperative alternative to rival models of economic diplomacy. Paving the way towards it with a progressive vision will be therefore among the core tasks of FEPS in 2027.

Boosting Feminist Foreign Policy in the European Union

Progressive governments around the world have championed feminist foreign policy worldwide. However, these hard-won achievements are under attack. The international far right- led by Trump and others- is brazenly attacking women, girls and LGBTQI+ rights by cutting funds to women's organisations, banning gender inclusive language from international resolutions, and introducing rules that impede the financing of sexual and reproductive health and rights. This reversal demands a strong feminist progressive response.

Through the long-standing FEPS/FES Feminist Foreign Policy Progressive Voices Collective (FFPPVC) collective, we will continue to bring together policymakers, academics and practitioners to advance feminist foreign policy around the world. By informing Members of the European Parliament and European policymakers, promoting inclusive, gender transformative research and analysis on foreign policy, as well as by actively participating in staple international forums such as the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and the Feminist Foreign Policy Ministerial, FEPS will continue to drive progress in this critical area.

6. **MIGRATION** – informing and sustaining a fair debate on asylum and migration, prioritising the monitoring of the Pact on Migration and Asylum's implementation and the development of integration and labour policies that actively build social cohesion; defining the features of an efficient and humane migration management; developing fair and transparent relations with the countries of origin and transit; as well as analysing the vital link between Europe's demographic challenges and migration dynamics.

In 2026, the implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum failed to mark a turning point for the European Union. Despite irregular arrivals reaching historic lows, migration remains a deeply divisive and poisonous topic. The 2026 summer events in Ceuta – when around 80,000 people, mostly young men, crossed the border between Morocco and Spain before returning days later – have exposed the weaknesses of the Pact and one of its main components – solidarity – as well as the extent to which externalisation can backfire.

Returns and migration return hubs are now widely framed as the silver bullet that will solve European migration problems, but they have also reignited the old controversy around secondary movements and the Dublin-regulation, so that a migration hardliner like Italy is now expected to accept returnees from other member states. Furthermore, previously taboo concepts like 'remigration' have entered mainstream discourse, shrinking the space for fact-based discussions focused on human rights, justice and realistic economic or demographic needs.

In this hostile political landscape and ahead of crucial electoral campaigns (including the 2029 EU elections), European progressive lawmakers are forced to hold their ground to prevent the further erosion of human rights and international law. Countering the present trend requires a strong alternative narrative that exposes the contradictions of far- and centre-right rhetoric while addressing how systemic racism and xenophobia affect European institutions and societies. Because failed integration offers an easy pretext to criminalise migrants, inclusive social and economic models that incorporate newcomers into the social fabric must be explored. Finally, at the global level, the impact of externalisation, relations with countries of origin, the widespread reduction in development aid, and the implications for migration dynamics need to be critically evaluated. The work done within this thematic field will be a contribution of a particularly strategic value for the accomplishment of Priorities 2 and 3 of this year's FAP.

Continuing Progressive Migration Group

In an increasingly multipolar world, fair and equal relations with the Global South – focused on building tailored partnerships – are crucial for a European Union seeking to assert its strategic autonomy. Against this backdrop, relations with African countries of origin and transit are key: cooperation with them is essential for an effective approach to migration governance that addresses the root causes of displacement, respects local needs and interests, and puts people at the center. In its fourth cycle, the Progressive Migration Group will continue to examine development cooperation, legal pathways, and bilateral agreements between Europe and Africa, drawing on its unique Afro-European perspective.

Addressing structural racism in European societies and institutions

The European Union is increasingly turning into a fortress difficult, if not impossible, to access for many non-white people – particularly Africans and/or Muslims. Behind prevailing identity rhetoric and seemingly "colorblind" bureaucratic processes lie underlying signs of racism and xenophobia that are spreading across society and deepening inequalities. In the current political context, the disguised racism is increasingly embedded in migration policies and migration systems (including the new border technologies) that ultimately contribute to labour exploitation. Progressive actors must become more aware of these trends within European institutions and FEPS should contribute by analysing the current trends and formulating alternative policies to halt this dangerous drift toward institutionalised racism.

Striving for migrants' social and labour integration in the European Union

Perceived failures in migrant integration are being weaponised by the European far right to normalise restrictive border policies and reshape mainstream political rhetoric. Socioeconomic struggles, housing shortages and strained public services are routinely blamed on migrants rather than attributed to shrinking investment in social and welfare policies. National integration policies are often fragmented, underfunded and focused on short-term security rather than long-term inclusion. Against this backdrop, investigating restrictive policies reveals how structural barriers – such as administrative delays, limited access to local services and unrecognised qualifications – cause integration failures and

labour market bottlenecks. By exposing these policy gaps, FEPS can help debunk anti-migrant rhetoric and define a progressive approach to migration management and social cohesion.

Monitoring the working and resilience of the Pact on Migration and Asylum

Although the Pact entered into force in June 2026, its practical application remains uncertain. Tensions among member states – highlighted by the crisis in Ceuta in summer 2026 – demonstrate that significant vulnerabilities persist, while it remains to be seen whether the Pact can safeguard human rights over the long term. Continuous monitoring is essential for identifying operational improvements and preventing the erosion of human rights protections. Key areas requiring oversight include the challenges frontline member states face in applying screening and border procedures, the implementation of the solidarity mechanism, the expansion of the Eurodac database and the evolving roles of agencies such as the EU Agency for Asylum and Frontex (whose mandate is currently under revision).

7. **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, strengthening and enlargement, as well as strategic partnerships

The EU is in a phase in which its political model is heavily under pressure. It faces pressure from external powers with the aim of weakening the EU's cohesion and from internal political forces challenging the foundations of European integration. Across EU member states, far-right parties are gaining influence and calling for fundamental changes to the EU political model or even EU withdrawal. Therefore, the core issue at stake is no longer only how to deepen European integration, but how to further establish the EU into a political union by European democrats acting together.

The fable and fragmented political Europe is a prey to the external powers exploiting the EU's divisions by, for example, geopolitical pressure, destabilizing Europe's borders and targeted misinformation. A crisis can simply be triggered through social media campaigns to which EU national governments can be pushed into competing responses. These can quickly turn into a political confrontation between EU member states. The result is an EU that appears divided and fearful. Finally, this can lead to the EU risking abandoning its fundamental values precisely at a time when they are needed. Moreover, the EU's ability to respond is limited by slow and complex decision-making processes. In addition, the gap between European citizens and EU institutions still exists or has even been growing.

Against this backdrop, FEPS works within the thematic field Political European will explore how the EU can strengthen its capacity to anticipate and respond to crises, overcome political fragmentation and make decisions at the speed required to tackle global challenges within an emerging multipolar world. Crucially, this must go hand in hand with a further democratisation of the EU, enlargement and forging of the strategic partnerships. To do so, the focus will be on the future of the EU institutional and political architecture, including EU treaty reform, the role of the European Parliament over the next 10 to 15 years, the role of European political parties in bridging the gap between European citizens and EU institutions and the conditions for integrating new EU member states. As such, the efforts within this Thematic Chapter will particularly contribute to achieving the Priority 2 of this FAP.

Daring more EU Institutional Strength

The EU is an economic giant but a very weak political actor. Despite various short-, medium- and long-term measures suggested in recent years to turn the EU into a stronger political actor, the EU's institutional decision-making processes are still too slow, too complex and can be blocked at any time. In addition, the legislative powers among the EU institutions are unbalanced. FEPS will thus revisit and study proposals for EU institutional reform, which is especially crucial in the jubilee year of the Treaty of Rome and amid the promise by the European Commission to call a New Congress of Europe. FEPS will try to assess how these can be unblocked, improved and strengthened to enable the EU institutions to make quicker and more effective policy and decision-making, also with a view to preparing the EU for enlargement. The work will thus address central issues such as Qualified Majority Voting for all Council decisions and the Parliament's active right to legislative proposals but will also go beyond to more specific measures to strengthen the EU's democracy and capacity to act.

Empowering the European Parliament

Within the EU's existing governance framework, the European Parliament faces long-standing structural challenges. To name just a few: its powers remain uneven across EU policy fields, its role in agenda-setting and executive accountability is constrained and the link between European elections, citizens' choices and EU political leadership remains incomplete. In addition, the Parliament's former lighthouse role as a democratic role model for countries in Europe but also beyond has become less clear. Therefore, FEPS work on this crucial issue will explore the Parliament's future role over the next 10 to 15 years by applying a foresight approach. While considering potential different futures, it will do so by looking into how its role, powers and democratic legitimacy should develop in an increasingly contested EU and changing global order marked by democratic back-sliding.

Designing Stronger European Political Parties for Bridging the EU's Democratic Deficit

The gap between European citizens and EU institutions is a main reason for the EU's democratic deficit. Consequently, European political parties would be key political actors in closing this gap by serving as a transmission belt between European citizens and EU institutions, especially by linking the various horizontal levels of EU policy-making. Thus, there is a need to continue exploring how European political parties can perform this role and by doing so become stronger political actors in EU politics. FEPS will continue the work that it has already completed on the transnational parties in the past to specifically focus on developing a plan for political parties as a transmission belt between citizens and EU institutions. It will look at ways to strengthen the EU political parties' visibility and capacity to shape European public spaces, mobilizing participation and connecting European and national political arenas.

Putting Human Rights Back at the EU Enlargement Agenda

After many years of standstill, EU enlargement has regained political momentum. Nevertheless, the process remains uneven. Moreover, there are significant challenges, including economic and social convergence, democratic governance, the rule of law and the protection of human rights across the EU candidate countries. While in recent times, the focus was on economic convergence, democracy and the rule of law, the protection of human rights was somewhat forgotten. However, human rights should remain at the centre of the enlargement process. FEPS work will contribute to putting human rights back at the EU enlargement agenda. It will examine how human rights standards are monitored and enforced. Moreover, it will explore how EU conditionality can better support human rights reforms. Finally, by continuing previous FEPS work on civil society and civil society organizations' role

in the enlargement process, it will look into how independent human rights institutions can help set standards and monitor progress on human rights towards EU accession.

Reconfiguring old and new partnerships

The proclamation of the new era for the EU – Canadian relations, whereby Canada would become the first associate member, was one of the focus points of the 2026 State of the Union address. Clearly, it comes amid consideration of how the EU could pursue the strategic partnerships – beyond the trade agreements – with countries that share its values and views on how the new geopolitical order should look. Finding a more comprehensive formula to seal these diverse alliances is therefore a subject of a political imagination, since it is bound to concern also countries such as Norway, Iceland (despite the outcomes of the recent referendum) and the UK.

FEPS has maintained a strong relationship with the UK-based partners, despite the outcomes of the Brexit referendum and the eventual departure of the UK from the EU. The new agreement between the EU and the UK in May 2025 allowed turning the page, but left many aspects of the new accord still open. FEPS believes in its role as a place where these issues can be debated. Following the successful and first-ever EU–UK Progressive Forum, which FEPS and FES Brussels and London held in June 2025, and the second edition in the fall of 2026, FEPS can continue to be a promoter of strategic dialogue and enabler of forward-looking conversations.

The FEPS European Progressive Observatory

In 2026, the FEPS European Progressive Observatory was relaunched. While the repository of the analyses from the previous years is still available on the website, the main product of the re-design EPO is the one-hour online session with politicians and experts held within two days after the elections and designed to help the European audience understand the implications of the elections beyond the sole numbers. Then, at the end of the week, an analytical article follows. After the year in the new format, this pilot phase shall be evaluated and further boosting considered.

8. **DEFENDING AND DEEPENING DEMOCRACY** – analysing the main threats to democracy (far right politics, authoritarian tendencies, nationalism) inside but also outside the European Union – in order to find ways to foster participatory and representative democracy, with a specific focus on young people.

Democracy in Europe and worldwide is deeply challenged by a phase of democratic erosion characterized by authoritarianism, misinformation and impunity. Democratic decline results from a complex interplay of underlying structural factors, such as economic inequalities and governance shortcomings. Both have been strategically exploited by far-right actors to erode public trust into democratic institutions. Thus, democratic backsliding is not an accident, but a strategy adopted by far-right actors pushing for an anti-democratic agenda, partly worsened through the ambiguous response of mainstream parties, which has helped mainstream exclusionary and racist ideas.

While democracy deserves protection as a value in itself, it has also crucial instrumental value in strengthening our collective ability to address global challenges. However, this is only possible through accountable and effective governance, active civic participation, institutions capable of reforming as well as a free and pluralistic media landscape. Crucially, reimagining democracy must begin from the bottom, driven by participation, innovation, and a shared vision for the future of European democracy.

This requires work and action on several interconnected topics. Based on that, the portfolio's work in 2027 is structured along three dimensions.

First is about defending democracy, namely, building on a workstream FEPS has substantially developed since 2024, this means understanding far-right strategies and their electoral appeal, and designing responses that counter rather than further their mainstreaming, equipping progressive actors with smart opposition strategies against authoritarian tendencies. Second comes to deepening democracy. In an era marked by a sense of a lost future, a progressive strategy for Europe must rethink and deepen the democratic infrastructure that allows people to imagine a shared horizon of social integration. Deepening democracy here means building formats that bring divided publics together – such as citizen panels – and imagining better ways through which an increasingly digitalized public sphere deliberates, not least by reimagining a free and pluralistic media landscape. And finally, the third is about innovating democracy, which translates to exploring both the risks and opportunities of artificial intelligence for deliberative, collective problem-solving and effective governance, recognizing that ineffective governance itself drives declining trust in democratic institutions and public services.

Defining progressive Strategies to Counter the Far Right

The far-right remains the most immediate expression of the democracy crisis. Its normative mainstreaming and political power, through government participation or strong polling across member states, carrying racist, misogynist, and climate-denialist positions, threaten the very existence of the European Union as a democratic project. FEPS's workstream, systematised since 2024 around far-right mainstreaming via the centre right, its networked global ambitions to build a hegemonic retrotopian project, and social democratic responses, continues into 2027. The Progressive Democracy Network, launched in 2026, will be consolidated around sustained working-level exchange among Brussels stakeholders and connection to existing networks in Europe and globally. In the same realm, bi-annual roundtables with S&D MEPs on democracy and countering the far-right will continue.

Empirically, in 2027, the work stream will carry out a comparative study on how far-right governments curtail trade union rights, and how unions fight back. Five country cases (Italy, Hungary, Poland, Finland, Austria) distil which defensive strategies work, equipping unions as allies in safeguarding democracy.

Exploring Next Generation Citizens' Panels

The last two decades have seen a deliberative wave to advance participatory democracy at the EU level. Building on the 2021/2022 Conference on the Future of Europe, EU Citizens' panels have become an important element of European participatory policy-making. Yet, the experiences of EU citizens' panels demonstrate the need for more inclusive and innovative models. The next generation of citizens' panels should generate more ownership, broaden stakeholder participation and increase policy impact. To do so, there is a need to test a new generation of citizens' panels that expands participation beyond traditional formats by engaging more diverse actors such as businesses, social partners, civil society, academia, youth organisations and political parties. Exploring how the Next Generation Citizens' Panels can be designed and applied in the European context will be a central issue in 2027.

Arguing for Free and Pluralistic EU Media Landscape

Public media houses in the EU are under growing pressure as global digital platforms reshape the media landscape and increasingly influence how citizens access information. Moreover, there is still a

fragmented EU public space as Europeans primarily consume news within national media systems. At the same time, free, independent, and pluralistic European media remains important for informing citizens and fostering public debate as an essential element of European democracy. While public media houses are funded at the national level, today's media challenges require stronger EU support. The next EU Multiannual Financial Framework foresees EU funding to strengthen independent media, especially through democracy and values programmes, but there is no dedicated European media fund, which would be necessary to support the transition of public media houses into shared digital platforms serving the common good across Europe. To establish these, FEPS will work on a forward-looking approach to explore how the media landscape in the EU should develop and how public media houses can turn into shared digital platforms, deepening democratic debate in Europe.

Putting AI in Service of Democracy

Today's AI development is driven by a handful of companies owned by the super-rich – built not to serve democracy, but to generate profit and, with it, power: influence over political decision-making and the capacity to manipulate citizens into choices they believe are their own. Departing from this dark diagnosis, FEPS will flip the script and work to deliver responses to sets of essential questions of democracy and AI. These are: What can AI do for democracy (not consumers)? How can AI-based tools help protect elections, such as the 2029 EU elections, rather than only threaten them? How can AI strengthen democracy's connective tissue rather than extract attention from it, for example, in participatory formats? And then, How can AI be governed democratically? FEPS will explore which democratic institutions, infrastructures and processes can best hold those building and deploying AI accountable. Alongside EU digital legislation, this includes exploring whether decentralised AI systems can be part of the answer to governing AI democratically: Smaller, purpose-bound systems that the communities they affect can own, inspect and correct as an exercise in democratic self-government.

Working on the intersection of demography and democracy

Europe is ageing rapidly. Driven by declining birth rates and rising life expectancy, this presents a set of challenges for European societies: territorial divergence, in which many regions decline while only some flourish, alongside a shrinking labour force and tax base, rising pension obligations, scarce housing, and growing needs for long-term care. While many of these challenges are acknowledged in EU policy work, including the EU's Demography Toolbox, this work tends to undervalue the democratic challenges posed by an aging society. These include inequalities emerging around aging electorates that overrepresent older people as voters, demography as a far-right mobilizing frame ("the great replacement"), depopulation, service withdrawal and democratic disenfranchisement ("geography of discontent"), and institutional responses such as lowering the voting age. FEPS will build expertise at the intersection of demography and democracy, drawing on its longstanding track record of amplifying young people's voices and advancing the principle of intergenerational solidarity. This work will feed into 2027 as a critical year for the topic: the implementation of the EU's Intergenerational Fairness Strategy and the challenge of anchoring intergenerational solidarity in the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework.

9. **GENDER EQUALITY AND EQUAL SOCIETIES** – strengthening the commitment to the feminist and gender equality agenda, with a focus on preventing backsliding, delivering substantive equality through transformative, gender mainstreamed and intersectional policies, with particular attention to the care economy and digitalisation.

Gender equality is a cornerstone of a fair, democratic and socially resilient Europe. Yet progress has always been uneven, and persistent inequalities are reinforced by economic, social and political structures that shape people's lives, opportunities and access to rights. Nowadays, these hurdles are further exploited by those whose political actions aim at causing a backlash and who wish to reverse any achievements that have led to improvement on the field of equal rights and opportunities. This makes the paradigm of equality and particularly gender equality a defining issue in the political battle of contemporary times.

This is also why FEPS will continue its pivotal work on this Thematic field, pursuing diverse threads that only prove that gender equality should be approached from an intersectional perspective, as well as seen as a principle to be mainstreamed across all the initiatives carried by the progressive foundation.

For FEPS, particularly in 2027, the focus point will continue to be the question of gender equality and the future of the labour market (especially in the context of the upcoming Quality Jobs Act), as well as the further work on care understood not only as a social service or labour market issue, but as a fundamental dimension of equality, rights and social justice.

Across all the strands, FEPS work will seek to move beyond formal equality towards gender-transformative policies. In doing so, the work will contribute to the accomplishment of all the 3 annual priorities listed in this FAP.

Striving for Gender Budgeting among the next steps for the MFF

Gender budgeting is a powerful tool to advance equality in every aspect of life. While currently there are so many questions about the final shape of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), it is clear that there will be many gaps, leaving space for interpretation. In order to prevent negative impact of these, FEPS will pursue the work that can feed into the EC guidance to member states and possibly strengthen governance structures for National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRPPs) to ensure gender equality. Further conversations would therefore be instructive to compare, based on country case studies, the most successful practices of gender budgeting in the Member States, as well as explore the coalitions that could advocate together for the progressive approach ensuring adequate financial provision for such key issues as funds to help combat gender-based violence and supporting victims of thereof.

Keeping the progressive focus on the future of care economy

The Fair Labour Mobility Package presented in 2026 is a key priority for Commissioner Roxana Mînzatu, as well as an important stepping stone for the EU Care Deal that is scheduled for being launched in 2027. Both build on the European Care Strategy introduced by former Commissioner Nicolas Schmit, during the last European term. FEPS, together with the progressive family, must devote attention to the implementation aspects – continuing its work that aims at showcasing the path to develop care economy. It must illustrate the principle that right to care is universal on one hand, and on the other the rights of the caregivers – many of whom are women – are indispensable. This calls for recognizing the value of care work and care workers' rights (including domestic workers), respecting workers' rights, and understanding the heterogeneity of the care sector. Importantly, further efforts on the question of the care work are essential to make the work of the FAP Priority 3 truly comprehensive.

Looking out for women and girls amid digital transformation

In 2026, FEPS decided to devote one of its flagship events – Call to Europe – to the question of gender equality seen from the perspective of the grand transformation. It resulted in identifying multiple issues that point to women and girls remaining most vulnerable amid digital transformation. Diverse processes that alter the labour market exacerbate existing inequalities and reinforce the barriers, seeing disproportionately fewer girls in training and IT-related education, as well as many obstacles for women to enter the labour market of STEM. FEPS aims to pursue the relevant research and help formulate a comprehensive set of recommendations on how to turn these trends and ensure that the transformation observed comes with empowerment and social progress for all.

Combatting Gender Based Violence

FEPS has been critically assessing the follow-up and implementation of EU legislation on combating violence against women and domestic violence. While this legislation represents a significant step forward, key issues remain unaddressed or insufficiently formulated. This is why, FEPS shall continue examining major gaps and challenges within the Directive, combining legal analysis, the EU political context, and stakeholder insights to identify critical shortcomings and areas requiring further political, legal, and institutional engagement. Building on work developed in previous years, FEPS will explore emerging dimensions of gender-based violence, including the links between gender-based violence, mental health, and care, as well as the role of technology in facilitating gender-based violence. The work will promote an intersectional and inclusive approach that addresses the needs of vulnerable groups and translates evidence into progressive, gender-transformative recommendations.

Expanding the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2026-2030

LGBTIQ+ people still face stigma, discrimination, and violence in employment, education, healthcare, and housing. Despite legal protections, enforcement is weak, and hate crimes often go unpunished. The 2026–2030 LGBTIQ+ Equality Strategy calls for integrating LGBTIQ+ rights into the EU’s external human rights and democracy policies, ensuring candidate countries align with EU values. The EU must strengthen acceptance, combat misinformation about gender and family structures, and support legal reforms. And it must do so inside of its current borders, as well as through the enlargement negotiations to ensure the expansion of the principles and prevent backsliding also in the current neighbourhood and beyond.

10. FUTURE OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY – analysing the positioning of the progressive forces across the levels of governance and in the opposition, with a focus on their programmatic and strategic dilemmas, organisational difficulties and electoral appeal, while looking at ways of restoring its capacity to frame public debates, to anticipate the societal transformations and to appeal to voters as a strategically viable alternative.

Social democratic parties across Europe face complex challenges. On the one hand, there is a preoccupation with the electoral standings, which in many countries point to the worst results ever and hence limited capacity to fulfill their role as agents of a viable political alternative. This is in

contrast with the experience of earlier decades when they have been able to decisively co-shape the post-war order and the subsequent decades (in Western Europe, as well as the post-1989 transition period (in Central and Eastern Europe). But, by having become a “traditional party” (either governing or leading in the opposition), they are also now more frequently considered not as a force of the system that so many within the societies are disappointed with. On the other hand, they themselves ask themselves about the qualitative changes that their programmatic agenda should undergo – not only for the sake of electoral appeal – but to make themselves re-emerge more confident that they are the force of modernity. For that, they would need to be able to better balance the inclination to protect and defend diverse past achievements that have enabled social progress, as well as look forward beyond the limitations of the polycrisis narrative to imagine a better, fairer future for all.

In that search for the path forward, there is no shortage of dilemmas – as the world is undergoing a profound transition, societies and the cleavages within them are evolving, and there is a growing tendency for politics to be more about confrontation and less about consensus-seeking. Amid these, the progressives must, however, persevere, accepting that, as a movement, they must be open to a critical self-reflection and subsequent renewal. This means addressing issues that for long were seen as sensitive and finding common answers to these, as well as seeking new programmatic openings and refocusing the agendas. The GPM in Barcelona and the S&D Group’s strategic turn are inspiring turning points on that path, but more needs to be done to also ensure that progressives across the EU retrieve self-confidence in the common project and believe again that the aspirations of a better tomorrow that so many still wish to believe in could again be entrusted in them.

Defining progressive politics for the future

Social democrats are a movement that builds strongly on its past and proud traditions. This is where they find the source of legitimacy and reassurance that, despite turmoils, they have always been able to return from even the worst of the predicaments. That can, however, at times, prompt a tendency to nostalgia or a defensive approach, especially in the context that is marked by polycrisis, and so many developments seem to be imposed by other means than the political decisions. Evidently, for as long as politics is limited by the notion of impossibility and necessity to deal exclusively with the pressing challenges, it is hard to restore to progressivism the notion of it being focused on delivering beyond today’s solutions and seeking pathways to a better tomorrow for all. This is also why, building on the Next Left research, in 2027 FEPS and the partners will aim at opening the avenue for the debate that will look at the long-term perspective, possible scenarios and the mission that the movement should embrace to become a pivotal political force with a clear idea on how to shape the future. The ambition here would be to redefine the progressive doctrine of European integration for the new times.

Analysing the space for progressive alliances in the context of left pluralism

The electoral map of Europe has been vastly changing. The transformation of the societies, dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs and the new demarcation lines marking conflicts among diverse voters’ groups offer a fertile ground for the former fringe parties to thrive. With their emergence, the political spectra are becoming fragmented, polarised and prone to being framed by new alliances. Against this backdrop and due to internal challenges, social democrats have been more than less frequently seeing that even finishing the electoral battle with the first position isn’t synonymous with winning them. Also, there is a need to rethink the strategy of coalitions, not only in the governmental and electoral sense. Here, social democrats must come to terms with the growing plurality of the left, as well as the transformation that has taken place within civil society. The questions

to answer here are not only tactical, but doctrinal (for example, the future of the eco-socialist agenda), and they need to be at the core of deliberations. This is also where the Next Left Lectures and Next Left country case studies, as well as the deliberations within the scope of the Next Left lectures, can be particularly instructive.

Preparing to win elections and (re)gaining the electoral appeal

Every generation brings a difference to the ways the communities are formed and the society functions. Then, also, the civilisational developments mean transformation of the way work is organised, which consequently impacts the organisation of not only labour force but also all the infrastructure around – from public institutions and public goods provision, through agglomeration planning, to consumers preferences and life choices. These go hand in hand with the altering aspirations and expectations from the citizens, giving then the fertile ground to the new articulation of conflicts and hence new lines of political divisions. With the weakening of what used to be “core electorates” and growing volatility of voters, understanding the electoral dynamics require further research and analytical capacity. The question it should serve is the fundamental one: whom does social democracy includes today and whom it can and should aspire to represent more, and how? To answer, FEPS and partners (here especially the Karl Renner Institute) will be able to rely on the launched in 2024 Next Left Progressive Pollsters Network.

Boosting governing capacity and sharing the best examples

One of the important aspects of the pan-European debate about the future of social democracy is about paying attention to nuances and creating possibilities for mutual learning. This comes with knowledge about reasons for which respective sister parties were successful or to the contrary, failed, what methods they chose and which benchmarks they set for their renewal strategies, and to that end in which way they defined their path (back) to power strategically and organisationally speaking. And then, also, what made their governance (on local, municipal, regional, national etc. levels) distinctively progressive. To enable such an exchange, FEPS, together with its Network of members, is in the best position to organize lectures, symposia and conferences involving the key stakeholders, but also to support the movement with specific research devoted to the country case studies. Developing the capacity to conduct multilevel governance is a particular focus of this endeavour.

Supporting Social Democracy in the CEE and in applicant countries

Though social democracy is an internationalist movement, for their parties, the national context, respective history and political systems matter greatly. To that end, when looking at the map of Europe and identifying the places where social democrats have been struggling, the region of Central and Eastern Europe (with some exceptions) stands out. That is especially true when we remember how many governments were in the hands of the center-left at the moment of these countries’ accession to the EU. With that in mind, in 2027 FEPS will enhance its existing efforts directed at supporting the renewal and strengthening of the progressives in that region, alongside enhancing coherence between the debates within the centre-left inside of the EU and in the EU applicant countries. To do so, it will continue working with initiatives helping to forge understanding about regional specificities and boosting the capacity through projects such as the Ones to Watch and OPU (Open Progressive University) modules.