

NEW PATHS TOWARDS PROSPERITY IN  
THE EUROPEAN UNION - RETHINKING  
GOVERNANCE, INTEGRATION AND  
COLLECTIVE WELL-BEING

# IDEAS

*Institut d'études européennes,  
Université libre de Bruxelles*

*May 27-29, 2026*

*Brussels, Belgium*



**PROSPER**

Jean Monnet Network



BRUSSELS  
SCHOOL OF  
GOVERNANCE



UNIVERSITÉ  
LIBRE  
DE BRUXELLES



**27-29 may 2026**

**Institut d'études européennes  
de l'Université libre de  
Bruxelles**

*Co-organised by*



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## About the conference

The biennial Interdisciplinary conference on **European Advanced Studies (IDEAS)** is a three-day scientific event organized by the Institut d'études européennes of the Université libre de Bruxelles (IEE-ULB) in collaboration with the Brussels School of Governance of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (BSoG-VUB) and the Politics and International Studies Department at the University of Warwick (PaIS-UoW).

The IDEAS26 edition is co-organised with the Jean Monnet Network PROSPER. The conference will take place in Brussels, on May 27-29, 2026. The conference will focus on **New paths towards prosperity in the European Union – Rethinking Governance, Integration and Collective Well-Being**.

Providing prosperity, alongside democracy, to European citizens has been a foundational aspiration underpinning the rise of the European Union. In the second half of the 20th century, the integration of a Single Market, guided by the principles of regulated capitalism and multilateralism, was seen as the strong cement that would ensure Europe's prosperity. Since the turn of the century, however, the picture has become increasingly complex.

The Eurocrisis and the ensuing aggravation of imbalances among territories across Europe, persisting social inequality, climate change, the contestation of liberal democracy, and the resurgence of war in its direct surroundings have all called into question the intellectual matrix and policy beliefs which had shaped the EU for decades.

On both sides of the Atlantic, reactionary political forces have gained traction by exploiting fears of decline, calling for a return to exclusionary and aggressive nationalism. The mainstream governing parties in the EU have seemed to converge on an external policy

reinforcing collective security and securitizing migrations, but remain divided on an internal policy for an ambitious sustainable socio-economic strategy.

This raises the question as to how Europeans can collectively find new paths towards prosperity. Beyond economic growth and competitiveness, prosperity is best understood as an overall state of economic, social and environmental well-being that ensures every private and public actor the opportunity to thrive. It requires peace and security, widespread welfare and justice, the sustainability of the environment and livelihoods, and democratic governance. To what extent can the EU, as a multi-level polity, provide these collective goods? What are the key institutional challenges and obstacles standing in the way of renewed prosperity in Europe? What practical arrangements and governance mechanisms can be activated to achieve these goals? And how would integration methods, Europeanisation modes and the relationship between the EU and its Member States be reshaped along the way? How would the various political actors and social groups in national arenas be affected by these changes, and are they committed to build new paths to prosperity in Europe?

*Amandine Crespy and Paul Dermine*



# PROGRAMME OVERVIEW



# #IDEAS26

## Wednesday, 27 May, 2026

### 12:30-1:00 p.m.

Registrations & Informal Light lunch  
(IEE Foyer)

### 1:00-2:30 p.m. - Panels

- *Governing social rights* (Room Kant)
- *The evolving accountability and governance structures of the EU* (Room Geremek)
- *The EU budget : challenges and prospects* (Room Spaak)

### 2:30-3:00 p.m.

Coffee Break (IEE Foyer)

### 3:00 - 4:30 p.m. - Panels

- *Greening the EU's economic constitution & finance* (Room Geremek)
- *The EU toolbox for sustainable prosperity : innovative or toothless?* (PROSPER Panel -Room Spaak)

### 4:30-5:00 p.m.

Coffee Break (IEE Foyer)

### 5:00 - 6:30 p.m. - PROSPER

**Keynote by Prof. Mark Dawson**  
*"Europe's expanding coordination space"*  
(ULB, Solbosch Campus, Building R42, Room Drion, R42.5.503)

### 6:30 - 08:00 p.m.

Walking Dinner (ULB, Solbosch Campus, Building R42, Atrium)

## Thursday, 28 May, 2026

### 09:00-9:30 a.m.

Registrations & Welcome coffee  
(IEE Foyer)

### 9:30-11:00 p.m. - Panels

- *Economic and energy security as vectors of the EU's industrial agenda* (Room Geremek)
- *The future of fiscal and budgetary integration in Europe* (PROSPER Panel, Room Spaak)

### 11:00-11:30 a.m.

Coffee Break (IEE Foyer)

### 11:30 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. - Panels

- *Conditionality, Coordination and Surveillance* (Room Geremek)
- *Governing Prosperity in the EU: Theoretical Perspectives and Institutional Challenges* (PROSPER Panel, Room Spaak)

### 1:00-2:00 p.m.

Lunch (IEE Foyer)

### 2:00-3:30 p.m. - Panels

- *Fiscal and budgetary integration in the EU* (Room Geremek)
- *Reconsidering the role of Growth in the European socio-economic governance* (Room Spaak)

### 3:30-4:00 p.m.

Coffee Break (IEE Foyer)

### 4:00-6:00 p.m. - PROSPER Policy Panel

*The future of EU public finances: negotiating the 2028-2034 MFF* (ULB, Solbosch Campus, Building R42, Room Drion, R42.5.503)

### 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Cocktail Dinner (Atrium R42, Solvay)

## Friday, 29 May, 2026

### 08:30-9:00 a.m.

Registrations & Welcome coffee  
(IEE Foyer)

### 9:00-10:30 p.m. - Panels

- *Decommodifying social life* (Room Kant)
- *Reassessing the EU's legal instruments for sustainable prosperity* (Room Geremek)
- *European Governance towards Shared Prosperity?* (Room Spaak)

### 10:30-11:00 a.m.

Coffee Break (IEE Foyer)

### 11:30 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. - Panels

- *Conditionality, Coordination and Surveillance* (Room Geremek)
- *Governing Prosperity in the EU: Theoretical Perspectives and Institutional Challenges* (Room Spaak)

### 12:30-1:30 p.m.

Lunch (IEE Foyer)

### 1:30-3:00 p.m - Panels

- *Labour and skills in the EU Market and Polity* (Room Kant)
- *The European Union and today's democratic challenges* (Room Geremek)
- *New pathways for EU industrial policy* (Room Spaak)

## DAY 1 - WEDNESDAY, 27 MAY, 2026

3:00 -4:30 p.m. (Room Spaak)

### **THE EU TOOLBOX FOR SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY : INNOVATIVE OR TOOTHLESS?**

Chair: Amandine Crespy, Université libre de Bruxelles

Speakers : Markus Haverland, Erasmus University Rotterdam ; Stéphane de la Rosa, Université Paris-Est Créteil ; Miriam Hartlapp, Freie Universität Berlin ; Paolo Graziano, Università di Padova

5:00 -6:30 p.m. (Room Drion, R42.5.503)

### **PROSPER KEYNOTE EUROPE'S EXPANDING COORDINATION SPACE**

Chair: Paul Dermine, Université libre de Bruxelles

Speaker: Mark Dawson, Hertie School of Governance

Word of Welcome by Prof. Federico Fabbrini (Dublin City University, Ireland), PI of the PROSPER Network

## DAY 2 - THURSDAY, 28 MAY, 2026

9:30 -11:00 a.m. (Room Spaak)

### **THE FUTURE OF FISCAL AND BUDGETARY INTEGRATION IN EUROPE**

Chair : Paul Dermine, Université libre de Bruxelles

Speakers : Fabian Amtenbrink, Erasmus University Rotterdam ; Päivi Leino-Sandberg, University of Helsinki ; Howarth, Université du Luxembourg ; Lukas Spielberger, Université du Luxembourg ; Maria Antonia Panasci, Mercatorum University and Bocconi University

11:30 -1:00 p.m. (Room Spaak)

### **GOVERNING PROSPERITY IN THE EU: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES**

Chair : Ramona Coman, Université libre de Bruxelles

Speakers : Federico Fabbrini, Dublin City University ; Larissa Willamowski, Universität Bremen ; Philipp Genschel, Universität Bremen ; Markus Jachtenfuchs, Hertie School

4:00 -6:00 p.m. (Room Drion, R42.5.503)

### **PROSPER POLICY PANEL THE FUTURE OF EU PUBLIC FINANCES: NEGOTIATING THE 2028-2034 MFF**

Chair : Amandine Crespy, Université libre de Bruxelles ; Paul Dermine, Université libre de Bruxelles

Speakers : Gaetano D'Adamo, Deputy Head of Unit, DG BUDG, European Commission ; Guillaume Rey, Head of Unit BUDG Committee and European Parliament ; Pierluigi Boda, Strategic Advisor to the President of the European Committee of Regions ; Isabelle Buscke, Secretary General of Finance Watch



**12:30 - 1:00 p.m.**

Registration

### WELCOME LUNCH

Institut d'études européennes (ULB) - Foyer



**1:00 - 2:30 p.m.**

Panel 1 - Salle Kant

### GOVERNING SOCIAL RIGHTS

Chair: Paolo Graziano, Università di Padova

Speakers: Fabian Lütz, University of Ottawa  
Caroline de la Porte, Copenhagen Business School  
Viola Shahini, Université libre de Bruxelles



Panel 2 - Room Spaak

### THE EU BUDGET: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

Chair: Paul Dermine, Université libre de Bruxelles

Speakers: Tiziano Zgaga, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München  
Jakob Pegels, Freie Universität Berlin  
Julien Debande, Université libre de Bruxelles  
Johannes Müller, European University Institute



Panel 3 - Room Geremek

### THE EVOLVING ACCOUNTABILITY AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES OF THE EU

Chair: Ramona Coman, Université libre de Bruxelles

Speakers: Paul Weismann, University of Salzburg  
Dilara Aydogus, SciencesPo Paris  
Valeria Zambianchi, Antoine Thill, Université Catholique de Louvain  
Simon Otto, Vrije Universiteit Brussel



**2:30 - 3:00 p.m.**

### COFFEE BREAK

Location: Institut d'études européennes (ULB) - Foyer



**3:00 - 4:30 p.m.**

Panel 4 - Room Geremek

### GREENING THE EU'S ECONOMIC CONSTITUTION & FINANCE

Chair: David Howarth, Université du Luxembourg

Speakers: Gianluca Berardi, Vrije Universiteit Brussel  
Max Nagel, Vrije Universiteit Brussel  
Lukas Spielberg, University of Luxembourg and VUB  
Aldo de Cesare, SciencesPo Paris



Panel 5 - Salle Spaak - PROSPER Panel

### THE EU TOOLBOX FOR SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY: INNOVATIVE OR TOOTHLESS?

Chair : Amandine Crespy, Université libre de Bruxelles  
Speakers : Markus Haverland, Erasmus University Rotterdam  
Stéphane de la Rosa, Univesité Paris-Est Créteil  
Miriam Hartlapp, Freie Universität Berlin  
Paolo Graziano, Università di Padova



**4:30 - 5:00 p.m.**

### COFFEE BREAK

Location: Institut d'études européennes (ULB) - Foyer



**5:00 - 6:30 p.m.**

PROSPER Keynote - ULB, Solbosch, Room Drion, R42.5.503

### EUROPE'S EXPANDING COORDINATION SPACE

Chair : Paul Dermine, Université libre de Bruxelles  
Speakers : Mark Dawson, Hertie School of Governance  
Word of Welcome by Prof. Federico Fabbrini (Dublin City University, Ireland),  
PI of the PROSPER Network



**6:30 - 8:00 p.m.**

### WALKING DINNER

Location: ULB, Solbosch Campus, Building R42, Atrium



**9:00 - 9:30 a.m.**

Registration

### WELCOME COFFEE

Institut d'études européennes (ULB) - Foyer



**9:30 - 11:00 a.m.**

Panel 6 - Room Geremek

### ECONOMIC AND ENERGY SECURITY AS VECTORS OF THE EU'S INDUSTRIAL AGENDA

Chair: Areg Navasartian, Université libre de Bruxelles

Speakers: Oriana Balsamo, Libera Università Internazionale degli Studi Sociali

Mathias Perl, Université libre de Bruxelles

Fernanda Schininà, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano



Panel 7 - Room Spaak - PROSPER Panel

### THE FUTURE OF FISCAL AND BUDGETARY INTEGRATION IN EUROPE

Chair: Paul Dermine, Université libre de Bruxelles

Speakers: Fabian Amttenbrink, Erasmus University Rotterdam

Päivi Leino-Sandberg, University of Helsinki

David Howarth, Université du Luxembourg

Lukas Spielberger, Université du Luxembourg

Maria Antonia Panasci, Mercatorum University and Bocconi University



**11:00 - 11:30 a.m.**

### COFFEE BREAK

Location: Institut d'études européennes (ULB) - Foyer



**11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.**

Panel 8 - Room Geremek

### CONDITIONALITY, COORDINATION AND SURVEILLANCE

Chair: Louise Fromont, Université libre de Bruxelles

Speakers: Ilaria Gambardella, Université libre de Bruxelles, KU Leuven

Martha Caziero, Tillburg University

Sabrina Napolitano, Université catholique de Louvain

Marijn van der Sluis, Universiteit Maastricht



Panel 9 - Room Spaak - PROSPER Panel

### GOVERNING PROSPERITY IN THE EU: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES

Chair: Ramona Coman, Université libre de Bruxelles

Speakers: Federico Fabbrini, Dublin city University

Larissa Willamowski, Universität Bremen

Philipp Genschel, Universität Bremen

Markus Jachtenfuchs, Hertie School



**1:00 - 2:00 p.m.**

### LUNCH

Institut d'études européennes (ULB) - Foyer



**2:00 - 3:30 p.m.**

*Panel 10 - Room Geremek*

### FISCAL AND BUDGETARY INTEGRATION IN THE EU

Chair : Rosalba Famà, Bocconi University

Speakers : Yaning Zhang, Hertie School

Tom Massart, Finance Watch

Martina Minardi, University of Bologna, Université Paris II Panthéon Assas



*Panel 11 - Room Spaak*

### RECONSIDERING THE ROLE OF GROWTH IN THE EUROPEAN SOCIO-ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE

Chair : Tiago Moreira Ramalho, Université libre de Bruxelles

Speakers : Louise Fromont, Université libre de Bruxelles

Martin Seeleib-Kaiser, Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen

Giulio D'Arrigo, European University Institute

Fabio Battaglia, University of Birmingham



**3:30 - 4:00 p.m.**

### COFFEE BREAK

Location: Institut d'études européennes (ULB) - Foyer



**4:00 - 6:00 p.m.**

*PROSPER Policy Panel - ULB, Solbosch, Room Drion, R42.5.503*

### THE FUTURE OF EU PUBLIC FINANCES : NEGOTIATING THE 2028-2034 MFF

Chair : Amandine Crespy, Université libre de Bruxelles and Paul Dermine, Université libre de Bruxelles

Speakers : Gaetano D'Adamo, Deputy Head of Unit, DG BUDG, European Commission

Guillaume Rey, Head of Unit BUDG Committee and European Parliament

Pierluigi Boda, Strategic Advisor to the President of the European Committee of Regions

Isabelle Buscke, Secretary General of Finance Watch



**6:00 - 8:00 p.m.**

### COCKTAIL DINNER

Location: ULB, Solbosch Campus, Building R42, Atrium



**8:30 - 9:00 a.m.**

Registration

### WELCOME COFFEE

Institut d'études européennes (ULB) - Foyer



**9:00 - 10:30 a.m.**

Panel 12 - Room Kant

### DECOMMODIFYING SOCIAL LIFE

Chair: Viola Shahini, Université libre de Bruxelles

Speakers: Paul Copeland, Queen Mary University of London

Pietro Valetto, Antwerp University

Jozsef Slezak, Central European University-Democracy Institute



Panel 13 - Room Spaak

### EUROPEAN GOVERNANCE TOWARDS SHARED PROSPERITY ?

Chair: Amandine Crespy, Université libre de Bruxelles

Speakers: Philipp Stutz, Vrije Universiteit of Brussel

Florian Trauner, Vrije Universiteit of Brussel

Marko Vidakusic, University of Rijeka

Stefano Turrini, Wuppertal Institut, Università di Firenze

Peter Kerckhofs, Eurofound Ireland



Panel 14 - Room Geremek

### REASSESSING THE EU'S LEGAL INSTRUMENTS FOR SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY

Chair: Chiara Armeni, Université libre de Bruxelles

Speakers: Myele Rouxel, University of Eastern Finland

Leila Kentache, Università degli Studi di Torino

Frederic Allemand, Université du Luxembourg



**10:30 - 11:00 a.m.**

### COFFEE BREAK

Location: Institut d'études européennes (ULB) - Foyer



**11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.**

Panel 15 - Room Geremek

### THE EU AS GREEN REGULATORY STATE IN A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Chair: Jane Arroyo, European University Institute

Speakers: Katarzyna Aleksandra Jancewicz, Université de Liège

Marta Paricio Montesinos, Vrije Universiteit Brussel-University of Helsinki

Pauline Phoa, Utrecht University

Paco Jimenez, Université de Pau et des pays de l'Adour

### DAY 3



Panel 16 - Room Spaak

### TOWARDS A GENUINE EU DEFENCE POLICY

Chair : Chloé Brière, Université libre de Bruxelles

Speakers : Scott Hamilton, Antwerp University  
Federica Fazio, Dublin City University  
Rosalba Famà, Bocconi University  
Salma Rhilane, Youth policy center, Morocco



**12:30 - 1:30 p.m.**

### LUNCH

Location: Institut d'études européennes (ULB) - Foyer



Panel 17 - Room Geremek

### THE EUROPEAN UNION AND TODAY'S DEMOCRATIC CHALLENGES

Chair : Alvaro Oleart, Université libre de Bruxelles

Speakers : Régis Dandoy, Universidad San Francisco de Quito  
Gianluca Sgueo, Brussels School of Governance  
Hugo Alexandre  
Shana Suzanne Adriana Atangana Bekono, The Hague University of Applied Sciences

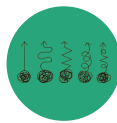


Panel 18 - Room Spaak

### NEW PATHWAYS FOR EU INDUSTRIAL POLICY

Chair : Emmanuel Slautsky, Université libre de Bruxelles

Speakers : Jane Arroyo, European University Institute  
Paolo Recaldini, Université libre de Bruxelles  
Jule Meyer, Universität Bremen  
Saverio Della Corte, European University Institute

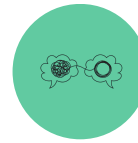


Panel 19 - Room Kant

### LABOUR AND SKILLS IN THE EU MARKET AND POLITY

Chair : Bastian Kenn, Université libre de Bruxelles

Speakers : Alina Jasmin Felder-Stindt, Universitat Pompeu Fabra  
Cecilia Ivardi Ganapini, University of St. Gallen  
Stephen Gaffney, Université libre de Bruxelles  
Sven Schreurs, University of Amsterdam



*Panel 1* **Governing social rights**

*Time: Wednesday, 27 May, 2026, 1:00pm - 2:30pm*

*Location: Institut d'études européennes (ULB) - Room Kant*

**Chair: Paolo Graziano (Università di Padova)**

*Enhancing the social and political legitimacy of the EU via the European Pillar of  
Social Rights? The case of the work-life balance directive*

**Caroline de la Porte, Zhen Im**

Copenhagen Business School, Denmark

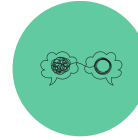
Emerging from the European Pillar of Social rights (EPSR), the Work-life balance directive (WLBD) - aimed at gender equalization of parental leave - represents a hard test for the EU's output in terms of social rights. Furthermore, policy-makers expected the WLBD to enhance political legitimacy of the EU, whereby citizens would attribute the EU in novel or improved parental leave rights instigated by the EU level, but implemented at national level. We develop a theoretical framework to capture the effect of the directive in terms of social rights (output legitimacy) and attribution of changed parental leave rights to the EU (political legitimacy). We develop a database for all EU countries, comparing leave schemes before and after the WLBD. The findings in output legitimacy are, firstly, that the WLBD has led to convergence on length of parental leave. Regarding compensation of leave, there are changes in half EU countries, but it is not as clear cut, since the compensation level (it is below 65% wage replacement) is unlikely to lead to increased take-up rates. The uneven implementation of compensation in conjunction with leave means that de facto it is only citizens countries with generous compensation that will benefit from the leave (outcome legitimacy). Regarding political legitimacy (attribution to the EU), we find, based on a Eurobarometer survey, that awareness of the EU origins of newly legislated parental leave is low. Thus, the EU has not enhanced political legitimacy in parental leave, as member state actors implement and deliver the policy.

*Does the European Pillar of Social Rights have real bite? An assessment in four EU  
countries*

**Amandine Crespy, Viola Shahini**

Université libre de Bruxelles, Belgium

Using a Europeanisation framework, this paper analyses the degree of "misfit" between EU directives launched under the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) and pre-existing national laws in Belgium, Ireland, Italy and Poland, each representing a distinct welfare state model. Findings show that the EPSR has a modest added value in shaping national social rights. Overall, there is typically a low level of misfit and national laws just have to be slightly altered to comply with EU legislation. Where a greater misfit did exist, resistance often weakened implementation. The study concludes that EU law is filtered by domestic political factors and administrative capacities. Successful and ambitious implementation depends on the political will of national governments and the power and ability of labour unions to mobilise.



*Where is the Digital AI Omnibus going? On the importance of safeguarding  
social rights, equality and non-discrimination in the age of AI*

**Fabian Lütz**

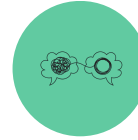
University of Ottawa , Canada

*The European AI Act has two major objectives, which will shape the future of how the EU addresses AI regulation and impacts of AI on fundamental rights: innovation and uptake of AI in the internal market and fundamental rights protection (Art. 1(1) AI Act). Those objectives are now challenged with the legislative proposal of the European Commission COM(2025) 836 final (Digital Omnibus on AI). This paper critically engages with the main proposed changes aimed at safeguarding fundamental rights (privacy, equality or non-discrimination), both in terms of substance, enforcement, societal and political impact. The paper argues that some of the proposed changes favour AI innovation over the protection of fundamental rights. The paper proceeds by organising the argument around the three strands of the proposed Digital AI Omnibus.*

First, it recognizes the advantages of AI systems to ensure a better fundamental rights protection (Sunstein 2025). Partly addressing unconscious biases and noise could contribute to less biased and discriminatory decisions of AI. The Digital Omnibus on AI builds on this and would allow for a generalised collection of sensitive data (such as sexual orientation, religion, race or ethnicity) in order to allow bias detection, prevention and correction measures.

Second, it has been long described in interdisciplinary scholarship that risks of AI systems to fundamental and social rights are omnipresent. Reducing rights of Art. 77 (fundamental rights) bodies will lower guarantees and protection to EU citizens.

Third, delaying the application of the core provisions of the AI Act of relevance for the protection of fundamental rights will lower the protection against fundamental rights impacts of AI systems.



Panel 2 **The EU budget: challenges and prospects**

Time: Wednesday, 27 May, 2026, 1:00pm - 2:30pm

Location: Institut d'études européennes (ULB) - Room Spaak

Chair: Paul Dermine (Université libre de Bruxelles - IEE)

*Taxing Power for the European Budget? Fiscal Lessons from Switzerland to the EU*

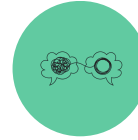
**Tiziano Zgaga**

LMU Munich, Germany

After the end of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (2026) and the Security Action for Europe (2030), the European Union (EU) budget will remain small and dependent on transfers from the member states. However, the EU needs money to create public goods, such as protecting external borders, fighting climate change, or regulating migration. It would need revenues from taxes (income, property, and value added tax). Today, this is legally and politically impossible. It was so also in Switzerland before 1915, and yet the Federation got the power to tax.

This article examines under what conditions, in a fiscally decentralized system like the EU, the units (the Cantons) managed to transfer the power to tax to the centre (the Federation). How is the Swiss federal power to tax regulated? What conditions have been put in place to reassure the Cantons that they are not losing their own tax powers and can even benefit from the federal power to tax? Does Switzerland prove that a co-existence of tax sovereignties (centre and units) is actually possible? Interestingly, the federal power to tax in Switzerland remains temporary despite several attempts to make it permanent: it must be renewed periodically via popular vote, the last time from 2018 to 2035. Why has such power become permanent in practice but not on paper?

The article relies on thematic analysis of primary documents, semi-structured elite interviews, and causal process tracing. Through comparative fiscal federalism, it identifies important tax lessons for the EU as new paths towards prosperity.



*How EU money is spent: Mapping institutional features of spending governance*

**Miriam Hartlapp, Taylor Pearce, Jakob Pegels**

Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

Scholarly attention on distributive EU policy has focused on the intergovernmental negotiation of the budget or on decentralized implementation in the member states. We are interested in capturing and explaining what takes place between: the governance of spending. Theoretically, we draw on competence control theory. Once the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) has been adopted, the Member States install the Commission as intermediary. The responsible Directorate General (DG) holds resources and expertise to spend the EU money. We expect the DG to arrange the governance features of EU spending in way to allow solving (policy) problems. But the DG is not unconstrained in doing this, rather, actors in the member states or in other policy areas control the DG. They aim at shaping governance in a way that allows them to spend EU money according to their own policy or national interests. We are interested in understanding whether an increase in the number of programs comes with more/ different types of controls that are likely to affect the EU's capacity to solve problems and do good for citizens. To this aim, the paper introduces a dataset of all programs through which the EU spends money in social and industrial policy. It develops and operationalizes indicators to assess competences and controls for each program/ year unit from 1987 until today.

The paper closely relates to research by Genschel and Jachtenfuchs on the capacity-building dilemma and by Zhang on the evolution of the EU budgetary galaxy.

*Crisis-driven innovation in EU budgetary governance: The 2028–2034 Own Resources*

*Decision and the new crisis mechanism*

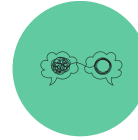
**Julien Debande**

Université libre de Bruxelles, Belgium

The EU treaties allow the provision of financial assistance to Member States facing severe difficulties. Article 122 TFEU has been used to address exogenous shocks, including via the SURE instrument during the COVID-19 pandemic. The limits of this temporary tool and of the current budgetary framework led the Commission to propose its Council Decision on the System of EU Own Resources for the 2028–2034 MFF. The proposal introduces a permanent crisis-related borrowing capacity, indicating a clear step in favour of deeper fiscal integration, and enabling the Union to issue loans to Member States.

The benefit of this mechanism would depend on strict conditions. It could be activated only in a severe crisis or threat affecting the Union or its Member States. Borrowing would be limited to crisis-related consequences and to cases where no suitable alternative exists. Activation would require a Council Regulation adopted with the consent of the European Parliament, and the own-resources ceiling could rise by up to 0.25 points.

The proposed paper will analyse the implications of this shift for crisis management and EU governance. It assesses previous and draft crisis-response loan instruments to examine continuity and institutional change. Unlike SURE, the new mechanism would be integrated into the budget and own-resources system. The proposed paper will argue that this transition would signal a constitutional development that 1) expands the Commission's stabilisation role, suggesting alignment with ESM crisis-management, 2) alters the division of competences, and 3) affects the boundary between EU budgetary authority and Member State sovereignty.



#### *Who cares about the budget? - Shifting institutional control in EU budget implementation*

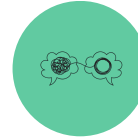
**Johannes Müller**

European University Institute, Italy

The Commission implements the budget on its own responsibility. This function of the Commission as put by Art. 317(1) TFEU seems clear at first glance. Indeed, implementing the budget has been considered a core executive task of the Commission since the early European Communities. Yet, in the Recovery and Resilience Facility, the main spending scheme of the Next Generation EU instrument, the Council has increasingly reserved important decisions in the implementation process for itself through Council Implementing Decisions and Comitology Procedures. Similar powers for the Council have been reserved to it in the Ukraine Facility and the recent SAFE instrument. Thus, we seem to witness a new arrangement for budget implementation with a more prominent role of the Council.

This raises one main question: What repercussions does this arrangement have on the treaty-based allocation of powers to the different institutions and what does it tell us more generally about the state of European integration?

The answer to this question will be sought in four steps: First, doctrinally this means engaging with the Case Law of the Court on the interplay between the prerogatives of the Council and Commission. Second, a closer look at the substance of the funding will test the hypothesis that the Council's involvement is linked to the 'high-politics' nature of funding programmes, like economic policy coordination or defence. Third, the role of the European Parliament will be explored. Does the involvement of the Council countervene the discharge procedure – the prime tool of influence by Parliament in budget execution? Fourth, the arrangement needs to be viewed in a broader context. Do we witness here a, deplorable, 'integration without supranationalism' (Genschel and Jachtenfuchs, 2025) or, instead, a fitting governance arrangement for a budget with ever increasing tasks?



Panel 3

**The evolving accountability and governance structures of the EU**

Time: Wednesday, 27 May, 2026, 1:00pm - 2:30pm

Location: Institut d'études européennes (ULB) - Room Geremek

Chair: Ramona Coman (Université libre de Bruxelles)

*Does the EU's agencification come to a halt? Institutional developments within and outside the Commission*

**Paul Weismann**

University of Salzburg, Austria

Agencies have become a common feature of the EU's administration, and still the EU's 'agencification' marches on. While the creation of an agency by now seems to be the standard solution when the EU wants to commence/intensify its administrative activity in a certain policy field, it is not without alternative. It is (nearly) always feasible and, given the Meroni limits, sometimes even legally required to designate the Commission administrative authority. Apart from these two options, the EU law-maker has repeatedly gone a middle way.

The establishment of the Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA) serves well to illustrate this development. Originally envisaged as an agency, eventually it was created by a Commission Decision. Formally ranking as a Directorate-General within the Commission, HERA's internal structure – in particular its Board which is, first and foremost, composed of 'one high-level representative from each Member State' – somewhat resembles that of agencies. The European Board for Digital Services (EBDS), established by the DSA, is another example. In both cases, during the respective creation process the standard solution (i.e. the establishment of an agency) was considered, but eventually dismissed. After their creation, the question whether an upgrade to an agency would make sense is still on the table.

This paper will review the various cases in which the EU law-maker eventually decided against the standard solution with a view to the different political and/or legal reasons, and with a view to what this could mean for the EU's further agencification but also for the Commission.



#### *Pluralism Reimagined: The ECB as a Case Study for Multi-Level European Governance*

**Dilara Aydogus**

SciencesPo Paris, France

Many European Union institutions face a legitimacy crisis, reflecting tensions between centralized authority and the Union's diversity. Across policy areas, EU governance structures struggle to reconcile efficiency with democratic accountability, raising fundamental questions about institutional design and the distribution of authority between the Union and member states.

The European Central Bank exemplifies this dilemma: its uniform monetary policy often fails to accommodate the heterogeneous economic conditions of Eurozone member states, contributing to a broader legitimacy crisis and highlighting the limits of centralized authority in a diverse Union. This paper situates the ECB within the wider EU governance framework, using it as a case study to examine how multilevel arrangements—allowing national central banks to conduct monetary policy semi-autonomously—could mitigate the ECB's legitimacy challenges while preserving cohesion and accountability.

Engaging debates on constitutional pluralism, the analysis revisits the German Constitutional Court's judgement on the ECB's Public Sector Purchase Programme (2 BvR 859/15) to show how legal and territorial dimensions of policymaking intersect and shape the limits of central authority. Monetary pluralism is proposed as a pragmatic institutional design capable of reconciling regional economic needs with EU-wide objectives while enhancing democratic responsiveness.

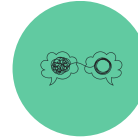
Comparative lessons are drawn from the early U.S. Federal Reserve (1913–1935), where regional reserve banks shaped policy under a federal framework balancing local and national priorities. Extending these insights to the Eurozone, the paper argues that adopting monetary pluralism within a multi-level governance framework could strengthen legitimacy, adaptability, and democratic accountability across Europe's diverse institutional and societal landscape.

#### *Renewable energy communities: decentralisation and justice throughout the energy transition*

**Valeria Zambianchi, Antoine Thill**

UC Louvain, Belgium

This research brings into conversation praxis of justice and decentralisation of the energy sector in the context of the eco-social crisis. Extensive research on energy transition examines how the uptake of renewables can channel elements of energy justice into the current energy sector. Specifically, this argument is analysed through the tripartite lens by Jenkins on energy justice, which is comprised of recognition, procedural and distributional justice. Further, extensive literature underscores that justice stems from transformation of current hegemonic systems – e.g., the energy one. Thus, we propose an expansion of the tripartite energy justice framework to include an additional aspect of energy justice: justice by transformation. More to that, burgeoning work reflects on the socio-spatial (de)centralisation of energy infrastructures and institutions to address the eco-social crisis. As a result, it is important to bring into conversation scholarships on energy justice and energy (de)centralisation. Against this backdrop, our research aims to gain a greater understanding of the energy transition through an interdisciplinary study across political philosophy, energy law and governance, and political geography. To do so, our work takes renewable energy communities (REC) as a case study of critical actors in the energy transition. Therein, we employ a combination of qualitative methodologies (content analysis of legislation and expert interviews) to answer the research question: How do REC align with the tenets of energy justice in the context of energy decentralization? Finally, we focus on REC in high-emitting spaces, particularly: European Union, national level (Belgium) and sub-national level (Brussels-region, Flanders, and Wallonia).



### Exploring options to strengthen the European multi-level governance framework for zero-emission energy-intensive industries

**Simon Otto**

Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), Belgium

This paper analyses the European Union's (EU) multi-level governance framework for zero-emission energy-intensive industries (EII). European EIIs face the dual challenge of decarbonising in line with the EU's climate targets while maintaining international competitiveness. While at the forefront of global industrial decarbonisation, European EIIs face severe economic pressures due to strong global competition and high energy prices, threatening their decarbonisation and competitiveness (and potentially survival). Addressing this dual challenge will require a comprehensive, coherent and coordinated industrial strategy and multi-level governance across Europe. Whereas the EU has an advanced climate policy framework (including for EII emissions), existing green industrial policies targeting EIIs remain insufficient, incoherent, and fragmented across EU member states. Against this backdrop, this paper explores how the EU's multi-level governance framework for zero-emission EIIs can be strengthened. It analyses relevant policies and actors and their interactions across the EU and member state level, taking Germany as an illustrative example. This allows to identify gaps and challenges across the existing governance framework for EII decarbonisation and to discuss potential options to address these shortcomings. The findings of the paper contribute to the development of a more effective governance framework for EII decarbonisation and advance the academic discussions on EU green industrial policy and climate governance.

### Panel 4 **Greening the EU's economic constitution & finance**

Time: Wednesday, 27 May, 2026, 3:00pm - 4:30pm

Location: Institut d'études européennes (ULB) - Room Geremek

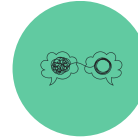
Chair: David Howarth (Université du Luxembourg)

### *Polycentric Governance as de facto Fiscal Capacity: Engineering EU Economic Integration via Green Finance*

**Gianluca Berardi**

VUB, Belgium

The European Union faces a critical paradox in steering its politics toward a new form of qualitative prosperity: the ambition of the European Green Deal is undermined by a structural "fiscal incapacity" to centrally fund the estimated €620 billion annual investment gap. While current academic literature often isolates specific actors, such as the European Investment Bank (EIB), or focuses narrowly on technical regulations like the Taxonomy, this fragmentation obscures the broader systemic shift. This paper investigates how the EU is engineering a "polycentric" financial governance system to function as a de facto fiscal capacity, bypassing the political deadlocks of de jure fiscal federalism. Employing a political economy approach that analyzes the interplay of technical rule-making, political contestation, and market-driven incentives, the study dissects the strategic alignment of three governance levels: the regulatory architecture of EU institutions, the supranational entrepreneurship of the EIB, and the implementation power of national Export Credit Agencies (ECAs). The analysis reveals how the EU effectively "governs through financial markets" by deploying an interlocking sustainable finance framework (Taxonomy, CSRD, SFDR) that functions as the market's shared operating software. Consequently, historically national-interest-driven ECAs are being compelled to adopt these EU standards to remain competitive, effectively harmonizing national public capital with supranational sustainability goals. Ultimately, the paper argues that sustainable finance has become the primary driver of economic integration. This allows the EU to achieve sustainable prosperity through centralized regulation, effectively bypassing the need for centralized taxation.



*Green Bonds or Green Chains? How Central banks in the Global South manage the green  
finance dilemma*

**Max Nagel**

Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), Belgium

Does the green finance transition reduce or reinforce financial dependency in the Global South? Green financial instruments — including green bonds and loans, debt-for-climate swaps, and regulatory changes— have gained traction. However, questions remain about whether the benefits of this green transition outweigh the costs linked to the financialization of climate change risk in the Global South. This paper examines the relationship between green finance and financial subordination by examining how state strategies to promote green finance vary across Latin America. It argues that differences in ideational legacies within national bureaucracies and the structure of national financial systems help explain the observed variations in adopting green finance. Analyzing laws and regulations, central bank and finance ministry documents, and descriptive statistics, the study reveals that while these strategies can mobilize national resources, they also risk increasing reliance on foreign capital and exposure to new financial vulnerabilities. These findings offer insights into the unintended consequences of financializing climate action in the Global South.

*The EU's Interventionist Turn in Sustainable Finance: Public Issuers and the Making of  
the Green Bond Market*

**Lukas Spielberg**

University of Luxembourg, Luxembourg, Vrije Universiteit Brussel

Extensive work on EU industrial policy argues that the EU no longer relies on regulatory instruments alone, but that it intervenes more directly in markets to achieve strategic policy objectives. Building on this insight, this article argues that a similar change has been afoot in financial markets, where the EU public actors can intervene directly through their debt management operations. A case study of the EU's efforts since 2019 to become a 'global green finance hub' illustrates the argument. The EU has come to take a dominant position in the global market for green bonds, with about half of all green bonds issued worldwide denominated in euros. While regulatory instruments, notably the EU's green taxonomy and its recent Green Bond Standard, were part of its strategy, the article documents the important roles that sovereign and supranational green bonds played in developing the EU's green bond market. Notably these publicly-issued green bonds could serve as benchmarks, develop best practices, and broaden the investor base. Even though the article concludes that the public issuance and the regulation of green bonds in the EU are not yet fully aligned, it concludes that the role of public issuers in developing financial market segments should be more explicitly studied as part of the EU's 'interventionist turn'.



### *Where does the money go? Mapping core-periphery dynamics in the legal design of the ECB's monetary toolkit*

**Aldo de Cesare**

Sciences Po, France

Central banks often portray monetary policy as a neutral, technical domain. Yet from the perspective of critical (legal) geography, the monetary toolkit is composed of spatialised instruments that actively shape the geography of capital, development, and dependency.

In this light, this contribution examines how the legal design of the European Central Bank's monetary policy toolkit structures the geography of liquidity within the euro area. In contrast to the doctrines of market neutrality and money neutrality, it argues that all monetary instruments encode spatially uneven effects. Building on a multi-scalar spatial lens inspired by economic geography, it reconstructs how legal rules governing access, collateral and operational modalities channel liquidity unevenly, constructing and reinforcing core-periphery dynamics. By tracing instrument-by-instrument the allocative logic of unconventional measures alongside ordinary corridor and liquidity-management tools, the article demonstrates that such measures and tools systematically privilege some states, regions, and cities over others. The findings reveal a structural asymmetry: unconventional interventions have tended to benefit distressed sovereigns and their financial centres, but not subnational and urban peripheries; while the conventional framework persistently advantages core territories. The conclusion advances a normative claim: acknowledging and addressing the spatial asymmetries embedded in monetary law is not a deviation from primary law but a condition of its responsible implementation within a heterogeneous monetary union.

Panel 5

### **The EU toolbox for sustainable prosperity : innovative or toothless?**

Time: Wednesday, 27 May, 2026, 3:00pm - 4:30pm

Location: Institut d'études européennes (ULB) - Room Spaak

Chair: Amandine Crespy (Université libre de Bruxelles)



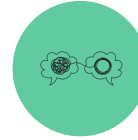
**PROSPER**  
Funded by Erasmus+

### *The RRF and socio-economic governance*

**Markus Haverland**

University of Rotterdam, Netherlands

The RRF links the disbursement of funds to addressing the challenges identified in the European Semester. This paper examines whether, and in what ways, the RRF has influenced socio-economic policy processes and reform, focusing in particular on pension and labour-market reforms in Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands.



#### *The multifaceted nature of the concept of European preference in the context of public procurement law*

**Stéphane de la Rosa**

Paris Créteil, France

In recent years, and even more significantly in the context of the current process of revising the 'public procurement' and "concessions" directives, a growing imperative for 'European preference' has emerged in public and legal debate. From a general perspective of growth and inclusion, the establishment of a preferential regime for European operators is presented as a necessary step to promote the imperatives of proximity and circularity in public procurement. European preference', which would result in substantial amendments to the directives, should be accompanied by the reinforcement of social and environmental criteria. However, beyond these considerations, there is a need to discuss the diversity of meanings and implications behind European preference.

In light of recent geostrategic challenges, particularly those posed by operators from third countries, the concept of European preference must be evaluated in conjunction with the principle of local preference. Within the context of public procurement, the implementation of local preference can serve to enhance inclusivity and proximity. The presentation will address the diversity of these dimensions and their integration into the negotiation of public procurement and concession directives.

#### *Beyond programmatic talk: measuring quality and quality of regulation for social, green and innovation goals in public procurement*

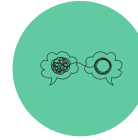
**Miriam Hartlapp (1), Robin Huguenot-Noel (1), Gresa Smolica (1), Gilad Weizman Shapira (2)**

Freie Universität Berlin (1) ,Hebrew University (2)

In the face of multiple crises, the state returns to change the quality of markets. Regulators at the international, EU, and national level claim to transform public procurement from an instrument used to buy products to a governance tool encouraging green economies, just supply chains or innovation. This paper introduces a new data set that allows to trace whether the described shifts stay solely at the programmatic level or translates into rules and instruments for market intervention. What is the breadth and type of changes reforming public procurement policy from the competitive price model to achieving societal goals via market intervention?

The data set captures the quantity and quality of public procurement regulation along two dimensions: policy goals and intervention types. 'Policy goals' capture the substantive content of a policy in the standards and provisions that address issues of social (e.g. insertion of minority workers), green (e.g. emission targets) and innovation oriented (e.g. R&D) procurement. 'Intervention types' capture how a specific instrument operates. We differentiate binding, voluntary, information and reporting tools as well as intervention types that are procurement specific (preferential treatment and filtration). Studying policy matrices emerging from the two dimensions for 43 OECD countries (1975-2025) we find that over time, strategic procurement has increased in all countries. It is most frequent for social goals, followed by innovation and environmental goals. Social goals were also earlier to develop, while more recently environmental goals became the more dynamic field of reform in procurement. For social goals, the state requires, in a binding way, that purchasing decisions follow strategic considerations. For innovation goals, and to a slightly lesser degree also for environmental issues, intervention is mostly voluntary. We discuss these patterns in light of ideas, interests and institution-based accounts.

This paper is linked to a paper submission by Paolo Graziano.

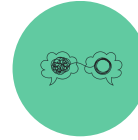


### *The Multilevel Implementation of the EU Just Transition Fund: Evidence from Southern Europe*

**Paolo Graziano**

Università di Padova, Italy

Over the past years, the debate over the analytical and normative need to address ecological and social concerns has grown substantially. From an analytical perspective, phenomena such as the Gilets Jaunes in France or the ecological vs. social disputes in industrial sites (such as, for example, the ex-ILVA steel plant in Taranto) have constituted a trade-off in terms of potentially conflicting policies, making the understanding of the various underlying preferences very important. Since 2019, with the European Green Deal, the Just Transition Fund has constituted the best - if not the only - European ecosocial policy. However, its implementation has differed substantially. Why? The article explores differential implementation performance in Italy and in Spain, focusing on three specific potential explanations largely derived from the EU compliance and the growing ecosocial literature: a) policy legacy; b) administrative capacities; c) domestic political support; d) intensity of ecosocial conflicts. The paper is structured as follows: in the first section a brief literature review on EU policies' implementation is provided; the second section introduces the analytical framework and the research design (questions, hypotheses, methods, case selection); the third section discusses the implementation of the Just Transition Fund in Italy and Spain; the fourth section discusses the findings and concludes.



Panel 6

**Economic and energy security as vectors of the EU's industrial agenda**

Time: Thursday, 28 May, 2026, 9:30am - 11:00am

Location: Institut d'études européennes (ULB) - Room Geremek

Chair: Areg Navasartian (Université libre de Bruxelles)

*The Role of Third Parties in the EU FDIs Multilevel Governance: From Information Provider to Procedural Actor*

**Oriana Balsamo**

Luiss, Italy

The European framework for screening foreign direct investments (FDIs), established by Regulation (EU) 2019/452 and refined by the proposal COM(2024)23, creates a cooperative administrative network between Member States and the European Commission to identify and mitigate risks to “security and public order.” Within this mechanism, the foreign investor – and, more broadly, any third party providing information – assumes an essential yet limited procedural role. Article 10 of the proposal codifies a detailed set of information obligations, requiring investors to disclose data on ownership structures, financing sources, and potential links with third-country governments.

However, once notification occurs, the process becomes strictly intergovernmental: neither investors nor third parties retain procedural visibility or participatory rights. This configuration raises a central research question: how can procedural fairness and access to information be ensured within an administrative mechanism that depends on third-party input but excludes those actors from the decisional process? The mechanism’s effectiveness relies on the accuracy of private information, yet those same actors remain detached from the governance dialogue it informs.

While confidentiality and national security justify this exclusion, the Commission’s 2023–2024 consultations reveal increasing demands for procedural transparency, predictability, and guidance on data handling. The paper argues that introducing structured feedback mechanisms, standardized notification templates, and minimal participatory safeguards – possibly through interpretative guidance on Article 10 – could reconcile confidentiality with fairness and legitimacy. In doing so, it contributes to the broader debate on how third parties may evolve from passive information providers to recognized procedural actors within the EU’s multilevel governance of economic security.



*Prosperity After Liberalisation: The EU's Energy Dilemma*

**Mathias Perl**

Université libre de Bruxelles, Belgium

In the early 1980s, the European Community faced a fundamental choice: it could build a Common Energy Policy - anchored in planning, solidarity and strategic investment, as envisioned by the Commission in 1981 - or it could construct an Internal Energy Market (McGowan, 1989). The Union chose the latter (Slot, 1994). In doing so, it moved from conceiving energy as a domain of national sovereignty to treating it as an object of competition (Edwards and Hoskins, 1995).

This shift produced a legal framework that enabled European integration “on the cheap”: it created a unified economic space without mobilising fiscal solidarity, industrial coordination or a federal budget. In this architecture, energy became a market long before it could become a policy.

Yet this model, shaped by the economic priorities of the 1990s, sits increasingly at odds with the qualitative forms of prosperity invoked by IDEAS26. It struggles to sustain the long-term investment cycles required for the Green Transition and constrains the renewed ambitions of industrial policy.

The paper argues that the path to sustainable prosperity requires a paradigm shift: moving beyond the inherited logic of “absolute competition” and re-embedding markets within a regime of public goods. Signs of such a shift are already visible: in recent years, the Union has begun to articulate a genuine energy policy - no longer at the margins of market integration but increasingly oriented toward strategic planning, security of supply and decarbonisation.

By examining the instruments that already steer the Union toward this emerging form of European energy sovereignty, the paper identifies both the possibilities they open and the constraints imposed by the enduring norms of the EU's economic constitution. It concludes by returning to a tension first raised nearly forty years ago: the difficult balance between a market logic and a policy logic in the governance of energy - and whether, ultimately, Europe can avoid choosing between the two.

*Rethinking Competition in the Era of Decarbonization: The Role of State Aid*

**Fernanda Schininà**

Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano, Italy

Since the launch of the European Green Deal, the European Union has entered a new phase of industrial policy in which public authorities seek to guide and steer private investment towards the goal of decarbonising the economy.

In this new season of public intervention, the EU has opened a broader reflection on the role of competition policies in the green transition and on the opportunity to pursue the objectives of the energy transition through a more flexible use of the tools currently available under competition law, including State aid.

Within this framework, the role of State aid in the green transition has become particularly significant due to its dual nature: traditionally it was conceived as a tool to prevent distortions of competition, whereas now State aid appears to be used by the Union as a lever to fund the new industrial policy aimed at achieving climate neutrality by 2050.

The key question remains as to whether relying on State aid to fund the green transition – through a loosening of the rules governing national investment support – can justify the risks of competitive distortions and potentially irreversible effects on the internal market. The greater the financial capacity of a Member State, the more extensive its ability to provide national support for investment, thereby increasing the risk of widening the gap between Member States. In this context, it is worth considering whether more efficient and effective alternatives are available to fund the green transition.



Panel 7

## The future of fiscal and budgetary integration in Europe

Time: Thursday, 28 May, 2026, 9:30am - 11:00am

Location: Institut d'études européennes (ULB) - Room Spaak

Chair: Paul Dermine (Université libre de Bruxelles)



### *Supranational to sovereign? The institutional development of the European Commission's borrowing capacity since 1990*

**David Howarth, Lukas Spielberger**

University of Luxembourg

Since 2020 and the creation of the NextGenerationEU (NGEU) funding mechanism, the European Commission has fundamentally reformed the way it raises debt on capital markets. The Commission's new 'diversified funding strategy' differs markedly from the back-to-back approach that the Commission had previously operated for over thirty years. It has also transformed the European Union's (EU) role on European capital markets, as the Commission has sought to become a 'sovereign-style issuer'. In this article, we test two versions of historical institutionalism to explain this momentous change to Commission debt management. We argue that incremental reforms to Commission borrowing prior to 2020 fail to explain the shift. Rather the development of the European Stability Mechanism's (ESM) borrowing method during the euro area's sovereign debt crisis a decade earlier was a critical antecedent from which the Commission borrowed in the context of a critical juncture opened by the creation of NGEU.

### *Borrowing for autonomy: EU fiscal capacity beyond emergency*

**Maria Antonia Panasci**

Mercatorum University, Bocconi University

This paper examines the EU's material capacity to mobilise the financial resources needed to meet its policy objectives, particularly through borrowing. After reflecting on the concept of autonomy in light of constitutional theories on the nature of the EU, the paper offers a systematic analysis of the EU power to borrow in order to clarify the conditions and limits of its exercise. Drawing on the experience of Next Generation EU, the only example to date of borrowing-for-spending, the paper assesses whether, and on what legal grounds, an emergency rationale as well as an amendment of the Own Resources Decision—the act that sets out the revenue side of the EU budget and requires unanimity among Member States and possibly ratification by national parliaments under Article 311 TFEU — are necessary when the purpose of borrowing is spending, rather than lending.

The paper contends that debt-financed expenditure can be decoupled from both the emergency rationale and the unanimity requirement. In line with the consolidated principles governing the legal and budgetary construction of borrowing, the authorisation to borrow should be provided by an act of secondary law adopted on the basis of a substantive competence. Such a legal basis, therefore, does not need to be the emergency clause of Article 122 TFEU or a budgetary law provision such as Article 311 TFEU.



#### *From juste retour to European added value*

**Leino Sandberg**

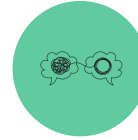
University of Helsinki

The RRF has demonstrated that distributing European money through national plans, designed and owned by Member States, is not an effective way of promoting joint European interests. Recognizing this, the European Parliament last year called for the next MFF to focus on European public goods and its spending to provide EU added value. The Commission's proposal for the next MFF falls short of this call. Apart from modestly sized individual elements that carry promise, such as the Connecting Europe Facility, there is no consistent attempt to focus on objectives that, due to their cross-border effects and wider European significance, form the core of EU competence and would bring value added when promoted at EU level. The majority of EU spending would still be for each Member State to determine, guided only by a vague notion of 'EU priorities', defined so broadly that everything and nothing is a priority. Better added value of the EU budget does not require more national ownership but rather stronger European ownership and control. There are plenty of fields where Europe can create real added value, from energy and other networks, to security, and to innovation, but realising that added value requires the EU legislature taking the lead and creating a well-articulated master plan to guide and constrain the national plans.

#### *National budgets and the Stability and Growth Pact*

**Fabian Amttenbrink**

Erasmus University Rotterdam



*Panel 8* **Conditionality, Coordination and Surveillance**

*Time: Thursday, 28 May, 2026, 11:30am - 1:00pm*

*Location: Institut d'études européennes (ULB) - Room Geremek*

**Chair: Louise Fromont (Université libre de Bruxelles)**

*Safeguarding Fundamental Rights in EU Funding: Lessons Learned ahead of the Next  
Multiannual Financial Framework*

**Ilaria Gambardella**

Université libre de Bruxelles, KU Leuven, FWO-Research Foundation Flanders

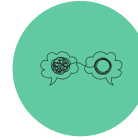
The spending period 2021-2027 has been characterised by a stronger emphasis on fundamental rights conditionality attached to EU funds within and off the EU budget. Three instruments are key in this regard. First, in the Common Provisions Regulation, a new condition specifically related to the Charter has been inserted which provides that the Member States must put in place effective mechanisms to ensure compliance with the Charter. Second, in the Recovery and Resilience Facility the Charter is not explicitly mentioned but fundamental rights find their way through the need for the Member States to implement milestones and targets in order to get EU money. Last but not least, the so-called Conditionality Regulation aims at protecting EU financial interests against breaches of the rule of law and applies to all EU funds. EU institutions are now confronted to the negotiation and design of a new Multiannual Financial Framework for the period 2028-2034. The Commission has already released a proposal and fundamental rights conditionality seems to be here to stay. In this framework, the proposed paper aims to reflect on the application of these three regimes in the past years, by comparing them in terms of their use, efficiency, advantages and shortcomings. On these premises, it aims to reply to the following questions: what are the main lessons to be learned from their use in this spending period? And how shall EU institutions take these lessons into account when conceiving new conditionality clauses?

*Can the protection of the European Union's financial interests constitute a genuine force for  
integration, enabling Union law to bring about changes of constitutional significance to the  
integration project?*

**Sabrina Napolitano**

Université catholique de Louvain

The protection of the European Union's financial interests has traditionally been regarded as a technical objective, primarily aimed at safeguarding the EU budget against fraud and irregularities. Recent developments, however, invite a broader reflection: can financial conditionality evolve into a genuine instrument of integration, capable of driving constitutional-level changes within the Union's legal order? This paper explores the extent to which the conditionality mechanism—linking EU funding to respect for the rule of law—may serve as a catalyst for deeper integration. While the landmark judgments in cases C 156/21 and C 157/21 interpret the scope of the regulation restrictively, limiting its application to the protection of the rule of law rather than encompassing broader democratic values, the potential for an expanded use of financial conditionality remains debated within the literature. Moreover, this development raises fundamental questions about the EU's constitutional order, notably concerning institutional balance and the allocation of competences. The analysis further examines the evolving role of instruments and actors such as the European Public Prosecutor's Office and the European Semester, illustrating how the protection of financial interests can indirectly safeguard values and redefine governance structures. By situating this debate within the broader context of multi-level governance, the paper assesses whether financial instruments can transcend their budgetary function to become structural forces reinforcing the Union's constitutional architecture and democratic legitimacy.



*The meaning and purpose of article 126 TFEU: a legal contribution to the  
multidisciplinary debates on EU economic governance*

**Marijn van der Sluis**

Universiteit Maastricht

What is an excessive deficit? That is a pertinent question under EU law as Member States are instructed to avoid them in article 126 TFEU. The standard answer is that a deficit higher than 3% is excessive, even if the Council and Commission are seen as having a lot of discretion in applying and enforcing the rule. A lot of attention is then devoted to the further rules on enforcement of the 3% rule through the Stability and Growth Pact.

This paper argues that this understanding of article 126 TFEU is misguided. It ignores the peculiar setup and language of article 126 TFEU to come to an oversimplified understanding of its purpose. There is no 3% rule, nor is the excessive deficit procedure intended to enforce such a rule. Article 126 TFEU does give the Council far-reaching powers to intervene in the public finances of a MS if that is necessary for the functioning of EMU, but it protects the MS from capricious use of this power by imposing several hurdles. The excessive deficit procedure is about restricting the use of this power of the Council, rather than imposing a strict deficit limit for the MS.

Hence, the key to understanding this part of EU economic governance lies in the Treaty, not the Stability and Growth Pact. The SGP is best seen as a reflection of the priorities of the Commission and Council regarding the non-use of their powers under article 126 TFEU, rather than as binding rules for the MS.

Although grounded in doctrinal analysis, the paper also aims to intervene in interdisciplinary debates on economic governance by exposing several persistent, yet inaccurate, assumptions about the legal architecture of the excessive deficit procedure, and how these assumptions have shaped the research and discussions on economic governance.

*Environmental fiscal integration through conditional funding: a path beyond conferral?*

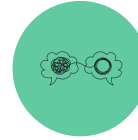
**Martha Caziero**

Tillburg University

The issuance of loans and grants under the Recovery and Resilience facility (RRF) is subject to the compliance of Member States' national plans with, inter alia, country-specific recommendations (CSRs) issued within the context of the European Semester. An examination of the tax-related CSRs issued in 2023 and 2024 shows that a substantial number of them require Member States to adjust their environmental fiscal policies, marking the emergence of (the attempt to) a form of "harmonizing coordination" (Dermine, 2022) also in this area.

Yet the scope of these requests extends beyond the limits of the Union's environmental tax competence to adopt hard law, which raises an important question: can funding conditions require reforms that go beyond the areas where the EU would be competent to legislate?

To address this, the paper first clarifies whether CSRs are subject to judicial review. It then assesses CSRs against the traditional standards used to test the validity of EU law, notably conferral, and, where relevant, subsidiarity and proportionality. If these standards apply to the funding conditionality like they apply to traditional hard law, current CSRs might breach EU primary law. If they do not, funding conditionality may open a back door to deeper integration, side-stepping the substantive and procedural constraints of the so-called "classical Community method". Either outcome answers a relevant question that might become even more urgent should conditional funding become a structural form of governance in the European Union



Panel 9

## Governing Prosperity in the EU: Theoretical Perspectives and Institutional Challenges

Time: Thursday, 28 May, 2026, 11:30am - 1:00pm

Location: Institut d'études européennes (ULB) - Room Spaak

Chair: Ramona Coman (Université libre de Bruxelles)



PROSPER  
Funded by Erasmus+

*Integration through Law? A Competence-Control Perspective on the Strange Fate of the Services Directive.*

**Susanne Schmidt, Jordy Weyns, Larissa Willamowski**

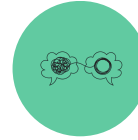
Universität Bremen

The recent transatlantic trade tensions and the Draghi and Letta reports have revived interest in completing the EU single market, particularly for services. While services account for 75 percent of EU GDP, liberalization efforts have consistently failed to boost intra EU trade. The politically charged 2006 Services Directive revealed long standing fears about regulatory competition, and a 2017 initiative was halted over political opposition.

Why have services remained largely unaffected by European integration despite persistent legislative initiatives? A common explanation attributes this to the Commission's forbearance—hesitating to advance liberalization to avoid alienating member states. Our analysis, within a competence control framework, challenges this view. Services liberalization is not only politically sensitive but institutionally and technically complex. Effective integration requires mutual recognition of professional qualifications, alignment of liability insurance frameworks, and respect for member state competences. These constraints severely limit cross border service provision.

Moreover, the lack of standardization and the importance of language and local expectations reduce the applicability of the goods market model. Consequently, few private actors litigate their rights under the freedom to provide services. Instead, companies seeking cross border engagement often pursue acquisitions or subsidiaries rather than direct trade, meaning much integration remains invisible in trade statistics.

We draw two conclusions. First, competence control analysis must reflect the EU's multi level nature: competence shifts to the EU may aim to rebalance authority at the national level rather than deepen integration. Second, liberalizing services as if they were goods is misguided.



*The capacity-building dilemma: managing competence-control tradeoffs in integration*

**Philipp Genschel (1), Markus Jachtenfuchs (2)**

Universität Bremen (1), Hertie School (2)

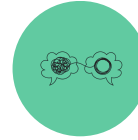
Crises, shocks, and unforeseen events present EU governments with a dual challenge. On one hand, they need to increase problem-solving competence to better cope with the challenge. On the other hand, they need to increase control over problem-solving in order to minimize their maximal loss. Both impulses pull in opposite directions. The search for better problem-solving fuels demand for more EU competence in order to better use the advantages of transnational governance scale. The search for control, by contrast, fuels demand for renationalization in order to keep policy making in the domestic realm. Bellicist scholars assume that the preference for EU competence for crisis coping will dominate the preference for national control, and, hence push centralization and integration forward during crises (e.g., Kate McNamara). Classical Realists make the opposite assumption: control interests will dominate competence interests resulting in more renationalisation (e.g., Stanley Hoffmann). We assume, instead, that EU governments react to EU crises by attempts to increase their collective problem-solving competence and their individual control both at the same time. They shun pure centralization or nationalization and seek for intermediate solutions that offer a better mix of EU competence and national control. In this paper, we use evidence on joint procurement and emergency finance to theorize how this competence-control tradeoff shapes institutional choice. We focus on four intermediate solutions in particular: EU regulation of national capacity, EU funding of national capacity, EU aggregation, and EU operation.

*The recovery and resilience facility as a new legal technology of European governance*

**Federico Fabbrini**

Dublin City University

This article examines the innovative legal technology of European governance introduced by the Recovery & Resilience Facility (RRF) and its growing diffusion to a plurality of internal and external EU programs. It argues that the RRF created a new governance model, based on a 5-step process: definition of EU priorities, design of national plans, EU assessment of national plans, national implementation of the plans, and EU monitoring. Since 2021, the RRF legal technology has been replicated in a half dozen contexts – including RePowerEU, the EU Social Climate Fund, the Macro-Financial Assistance+ Instrument for Ukraine 2023, the Ukraine Facility and even the new Stability and Growth Pact. The RRF model has several legitimacy advantages, because it favors national ownership, while still endowing the EU institutions with significant leeway to shape national policy-making. Moreover, as a performance-based arrangement, it has effectiveness advantages too. Yet this model also has drawbacks worth exploring



### Panel 10 **FISCAL AND BUDGETARY INTEGRATION IN THE EU**

Time: Thursday, 28 May, 2026, 2:00pm - 3:30pm

Location: Institut d'études européennes (ULB) - Room Geremek

Chair: Rosalba Famà (Bocconi University)

#### *Unpacking the Galaxy: The evolution of EU budgetary capacity*

**Yaning Zhang**

Hertie School

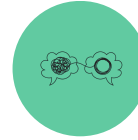
The standard EU budget—both the Multiannual Financial Framework and the annual budget—is tightly constrained by the budgetary procedure and a net-payment logic that often pits national governments against one another. Yet over the past decade, the EU budget has managed to break through these constraints and undergone a significant capacity expansion through a series of irregular and exceptional instruments, most notably borrowing and lending mechanisms such as NGEU. These irregular instruments, however, have rendered the EU budgetary system increasingly complex and opaque, turning it into what can be described as a ‘budgetary galaxy’. To unpack this galaxy and assess the Union’s actual budgetary capacity, the article first conceptualizes EU revenue as a multi-layer system consisting of ‘own resources’ at its core, complemented by ‘other resources’ (primarily lending and borrowing operations) and various off-budget instruments. It then introduces a new dataset that maps the historical evolution of this multi-layered revenue structure. This article contributes to a deeper understanding of competence-control dynamics in EU budgetary politics and offers new insights into how the Union’s fiscal capacity evolves beyond the formal budget constraints.

#### *A Shield for "Europeanness"? The European Bonds Debate in the (Post-)Pandemic Era*

**Tom Massart**

Finance Watch

Since the Maastricht Treaty, common debt issuance has sparked controversy. Yet, the unexpected agreement in 2020 to jointly borrow to finance the Recovery Plan demonstrated that debates on joint borrowing were never definitively settled, and that the taboo could, under certain conditions, be temporarily broken. This paper seeks to answer a fundamental question: how can we explain that common debt issuance—a solution rejected since the Maastricht Treaty—was embraced during the pandemic, and is now being considered in the post-pandemic period? From a theoretical perspective, the research adapts Kenneth Dyson’s conceptualisation of public debt to the (post-)pandemic reality of the European Union. It introduces the notion of an ontological model of debt, highlighting the emergence of an identity-driven perception of common debt within the EU—one linked to the political will to preserve the ‘European way of life’ during times of crisis. Analytically, the paper demonstrates that common debt is a polysemous concept. Empirically, this study conducts an illustrative analysis of press articles to trace the emergence of the new ontological vision of public debt at the EU level during the pandemic (2020-2021) and the post-pandemic era (2022-2024). While hierarchical and transactional views of public debt continue to clash with a more socially oriented perception of EU bonds, NGEU has paved the way for the emergence of an identity-based perspective on joint debt. Importantly, this research sets a new agenda for studying common debt and the politics of European bonds.



## THE EU'S TRANSITION TOWARD A BUDGETARY UNION

**Martina Minardi**

University of Bologna and University of Paris II Panthéon Assas, Italy

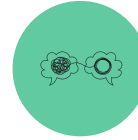
The EU budgetary discipline is anchored in the principle of sound and sustainable public finances. Pursuant to this principle, the Union established a legal paradigm of fiscal stability which, over the course of successive economic crises, increasingly constrained the ability to deploy public expenditure as an instrument of economic policy.

On the one hand, the EU budget - constitutionally required to remain in balance, financed solely through own resources, and modest in scale - has been structurally inadequate to ensure economic stabilisation and, more generally, prosperity during periods of recession. On the other hand, at Member State level, the deficit and debt rules, reinforced through repeated revisions of the Stability and Growth Pact and by the Fiscal Compact, have substantially reduced national budgetary room for manoeuvre. Taken together, these constraints embedded in the stability paradigm have legally circumscribed the recourse to deficit spending and contributed to the long-lasting stigmatisation of public expenditure as a source of macro-financial instability, thereby becoming de facto instrumental to the austerity policies applied during the euro-area crisis.

From 2020 onwards, however, this framework has undergone significant changes. The pandemic and post-pandemic crises inaugurated a phase of profound innovation, marked by a renewed spirit of solidarity that broke with the long-standing continuity of austerity. The adoption of instruments such as SURE, Next Generation EU and, more recently, the Readiness 2030 plan illustrates an unprecedented recourse to common borrowing and to Article 122 TFEU as a legal basis, signalling the emergence of a new financial paradigm centred on the extensive valorisation of public expenditure - national and, above all, European - with significant implications for social cohesion. Taken together, these instruments represent a point of no return in the process of European economic integration.

Against this background, the present analysis seeks to clarify the current stage of budgetary integration by addressing the following question: what are the constitutional consequences of the shift from the stability paradigm to the solidarity paradigm in EU public finance? The methodological approach is constitutional in nature and focuses on identifying the main innovative features of the emerging multilevel governance of European public expenditure.

Building on these premises, the contribution identifies as its principal result the emergence of a Budgetary Union, understood as an intermediate stage in the integration process between the originally weak economic pillar of EMU and a fully-fledged fiscal union. From an institutional perspective, the Budgetary Union is conceptualised as a multilevel system of budgetary coordination in which European and national spending interact within a horizontal and vertical synergistic logic capable of generating European public goods. From a substantive perspective, it embodies a qualitative conception of public finance in which what matters is no longer solely how much Member States spend, but also - and above all - how they spend. In this regard, the analysis highlights the emergence of a new financial category: quality public expenditure, understood as spending capable of generating economic and social prosperity and sustaining long-term growth. A particularly emblematic example is provided by the investments in ecological transition financed under the Recovery and Resilience Facility.



Panel 11

## Reconsidering the role of Growth in the European socio-economic governance

Time: Thursday, 28 May, 2026, 2:00pm - 3:30pm

Location: Institut d'études européennes (ULB) - Room Spaak

Chair: Tiago Moreira Ramalho (Université libre de Bruxelles)

### *The law of growth and the protection of social rights in the EU*

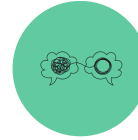
**Louise Fromont**

Université libre de Bruxelles

Since the 1980s, economic growth has received increased attention from EU's institutions. While growth was originally viewed as the natural outcome of economic integration, it now structures the European debate and constitutes the central pillar of the economic and social strategies successively implemented by the European institutions. Although the economic growth is not a recent issue, the consequences drawn from its pursuit in the formulation and elaboration of EU law are much more recent.

Against this background, this contribution aims to analyse the links, within the EU legal framework, between economic growth and the protection of social rights. It will first examine the gradual inclusion of the objective of "economic growth" in EU law in relation to social rights, as well as the case law of the Court of Justice of the EU connected to this. Secondly, the contribution will confront these developments with theories of degrowth, which call for rethinking the centrality of growth in our societies.

The contribution argues that the pursuit of growth traps fundamental rights in a paradox: on the one hand, growth appears necessary for social rights, as it would provide the financial resources required to guarantee them; on the other hand, it ultimately contributes to their weakening. The contribution will conclude by outlining possible avenues for breaking out of this trap.



*Pension Systems under Post-Growth Scenarios*

**Martin Seeleib-Kaiser, Miriam Zeitler**

Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen

Climate change has emerged as one of the most pressing challenges of the twenty-first century. Rising temperatures, intensifying droughts, wildfires, and the spread of climate-sensitive diseases threaten livelihoods, wellbeing, and socioeconomic security globally. These developments have heightened concerns not only in the natural sciences but also in social policy research, where scholars increasingly challenge both the desirability and the long-term viability of continued economic expansion. While green growth perspectives advocate the continuation of growth as a political goal that can be decoupled from its impact on the environment, post-growth theories call for a restructuring of the economy towards declining growth. However, historically, welfare states have depended on sustained economic growth to finance their social policies, a relationship well established in functionalist theory and supported by extensive empirical research. Thus, the growth dependency of welfare systems has emerged as a central concern within contemporary social science scholarship. This paper empirically examines this dependency by focusing on pension systems, which constitute one of the largest expenditure categories in most welfare states. Using established pension projection models, it systematically alters the underlying assumptions about GDP growth to estimate the additional financial resources required to sustain existing pension commitments under lower-growth or no-growth scenarios. The analysis also examines whether the policy strategies discussed in the literature to mitigate these dependencies – such as higher taxation of high-income and high-wealth groups – could sufficiently compensate for the shortfall generated by reduced economic growth.

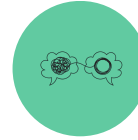
*Governing Growth in the European Union: Building the EU's Economic Government  
through Experimentation*

**Giulio D'Arrigo**

European University Institute

The establishment and development of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) reflect the European Union's ambition to govern the economies of its Member States beyond a narrow logic of market integration. While mainstream interpretations of EMU have emphasised its regulatory and stability-oriented functions, the Union has also progressively built institutional structures that aim to exercise a more active role in economic government oriented towards socio-economic growth within its multilevel polity. Over time, the EU has developed the capacity to steer domestic structural reforms through evolving governance architectures of socio-economic policy coordination. Despite the often modest implementation of EU recommendations in this domain, supranational actors—particularly within the European Commission—have remained strongly committed to expanding the Union's involvement in national socio-economic policy-making through institutionalised channels. Given the deep diversity of growth and welfare regimes among Member States, this institution-building process has unfolded in a highly experimental manner.

My research traces the long-term institutional development of the EU's capacity to steer structural reforms at the domestic level, identifying the drivers of its emergence, persistence, and frequent redesign, and emphasising endogenous dynamics of gradual institutional change. This paper, which represents the first section of my PhD thesis, provides a thorough theoretical and methodological framework for analysing this process. The empirical sections of the thesis will apply sequential process-tracing to examine the design and evolution of the main governance architectures for socio-economic coordination: the BEPGs under Maastricht, the Open Method of Coordination and the Lisbon Strategy, the European Semester, and the RRF governance.

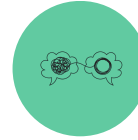


### *Ideas of Growth: A Comparative Study of Political Parties' Views on Economic and Sustainable Development*

**Fabio Battaglia (1), Gianmarco Fifi (2)**

University of Birmingham (1), University of California (2)

The first two decades of the 21st century have been characterised by heated discussions on the nature of economic growth and its purpose, especially in light of increasing climate challenges. In this paper, we ask whether there are differences between and within countries, and across political groups, in how growth is perceived and justified, and whether this is seen as a driving or hindering factor for the achievement of sustainable development, social justice, and well-being more broadly. The study focuses on eight OECD countries. We selected countries based on their classification in the welfare state and Growth Model Theory literatures to assess if parties' positions align with the expectations associated with their respective welfare regime and growth model. For all their contributions, these literatures rely too much on macro and national data sources, thus missing the micro- and meso-level. In doing so, the aforementioned typologies offer simplified descriptions of how growth is interpreted in different contexts and different periods. We contend, instead, that to get a richer picture we need to look more at ideas and identify intra-country groups that propose certain views over others. We do so through a quantitative analysis of political parties' press releases and news items published over the past fifteen years. Preliminary conclusions show that party-level variations exceed the differences at the national level. In addition, we show that recent crises have had a significant impact in fostering new ideas of economic growth (linked to solidarity and green development).



*Panel 12* **Decommodifying social life**

*Time: Friday, 29 May, 2026, 9:00am - 10:30am*

*Location: Institut d'études européennes (ULB) - Room Kant*

**Chair: Viola Shahini (Université libre de Bruxelles)**

*The Political Economy of Housing in the European Union: Crisis and Governance Beyond*

*EU Competence*

**Paul Copeland**

Queen Mary University of London

Housing has long been regarded as a national or subnational competence within Europe, yet the deepening affordability crisis has exposed the limitations of this model. The decline of social and affordable housing, alongside the broader financialisation of the sector, has generated acute social pressures across Member States. Between 2015 and 2023, EU house prices increased by almost fifty per cent, contributing to rising rent burdens, overcrowding, and restricted access to affordable homes. Although the EU lacks formal Treaty-based competence in housing, European integration has nonetheless produced significant indirect effects through the Single Market, state aid regulation, and competition policy. These market-driven governance frameworks have generated spillovers with substantial implications for housing, a dynamic captured by the notion of “competence by stealth”. In response to mounting political salience, the second von der Leyen Commission has committed to launching an EU Housing Strategy by 2026. Yet this development raises a core institutional dilemma: whether the EU can meaningfully intervene in a non-competence policy field using legal and policy instruments originally designed to facilitate market integration.

This paper examines how the EU is attempting to govern housing without a formal competence and evaluates the implications for the future of European integration. It advances conceptual debates on hard and soft law, competence boundaries, and the repurposing of governance frameworks in response to social policy demands. Empirically, it draws on documentary analysis and thirty semi-structured interviews with officials and civil society actors engaged in housing policymaking. The findings illuminate the opportunities and constraints facing the EU as it seeks to address housing affordability while operating within the limits of its existing legal architecture.



### *The Wealth Inequality of Real Estate: How Secondary Properties Undermine Pathways to Shared Prosperity in Europe*

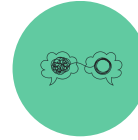
**Pietro Valetto (1), Stefano Filauro (2), Ive Marx (1)**

Antwerp University, Belgium (1), L'Università degli Studi di Roma "La  
Sapienza" (2)

While prosperity and collective well-being remain foundational aspirations of European integration, persistent wealth inequality poses a structural barrier to these goals. Recent comparative research identifies housing as central to cross-national variation in wealth inequality, emphasizing its equalizing role relative to financial assets. Yet this literature treats real estate as a monolithic category, obscuring the dual nature of property as both consumption good and investment vehicle.

We extend this framework by disaggregating housing wealth into Household Main Residence (HMR) and Other Real Estate (ORE) to examine how each distinctly contributes to national wealth inequality. Using harmonized microdata from the Household Finance and Consumption Survey (EU, 2021) and the Survey of Consumer Finances (US, 2022), we demonstrate that HMR and ORE operate as opposing forces: while primary residences equalize wealth distributions, secondary properties concentrate them. Our Gini decomposition reveals that ORE is the most unequally distributed wealth component in every country examined—exceeding even financial assets.

These findings carry significant implications for EU socio-economic governance. The equalizing potential of housing, emphasized in prior work, holds only for primary residences. Meanwhile, Other Real Estate emerges as a potent but overlooked driver of wealth concentration. This suggests that policies aimed at promoting shared prosperity must look beyond homeownership access to address the differential taxation and regulation of primary versus secondary properties—a governance challenge requiring coordinated action across European welfare states.



### *Governance for Collective Well-Being through Advancing Food Citizenship in the European Union*

**Jozsef Slezak**

Central European Institute - Democracy Institute

Contemporary EU food systems are situated at the intersection of multiple crises –environmental degradation, persistent social inequalities, public health pressures and declining trust in democratic institutions. These challenges mirror the broader governance and prosperity dilemmas highlighted in the IDEAS26 call, raising fundamental questions about how the EU can secure core collective goods such as sustainability, welfare, justice and democratic governance within a complex multi-level polity. This paper argues that food citizenship (FC) offers an overlooked but promising pathway for rethinking governance and enhancing collective well-being in the EU.

While FC has gained visibility in academic and civil society debates, it remains conceptually fragmented and largely absent from EU-level policy frameworks – especially when compared with more consolidated thematic citizenship models such as digital or energy citizenship. Building on recent EU initiatives on democracy, participation and just transitions, the paper proposes that a consolidated FC concept could help redefine prosperity in the food domain by empowering citizens not only as consumers, but as civic agents shaping policy choices, institutional priorities and socio-ecological futures.

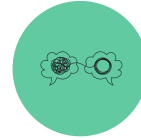
Drawing on academic and grey literature, illustrative examples of FC initiatives across the EU, and recent food-related policy developments, the paper outlines a preliminary policy framework for operationalising FC at EU level. The paper presents FC as a form of government innovation: a governance approach that enables public authorities to anticipate systemic risks, involve diverse actors, and cultivate more adaptive, participatory and accountable modes of policymaking. Integrating FC into EU food governance would reinforce the Union's broader commitment to democratic renewal and provide a new pathway toward a more sustainable, just and resilient form of prosperity.



# #IDEAS26

*New paths towards prosperity in the European Union -  
Rethinking Governance, Integration and Collective Well-Being*

**PANEL  
PRESENTATIONS**



*Friday, 29 May 2026*



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## Panel 13 **European Governance towards Shared Prosperity**

Time: Friday, 29 May, 2026, 9:00am - 10:30am

Location: Institut d'études européennes (ULB) - Room Spaak

Chair: Amandine Crespy (Université libre de Bruxelles)

*Failure or Resilience? Analysing cooperation patterns in European asylum governance*

**Philipp Stutz (1), Florian Trauner (1), Philipp Lutz (2)**

Vrije Universiteit Brussels (1), Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (2)

In 2026, the EU's Asylum and Migration Management Regulation which will replace the Dublin system that designates the member state responsible for examining asylum applications. In practice, however, the first country of entry will most often still be the country in charge – which has long been criticised for being ineffective and placing disproportionate responsibility on member states with external borders. We have nevertheless a very limited understanding of how the Dublin rules shape the responsibility-sharing behaviour of member states. This article seeks to address this research gap by analysing the dynamics of solidarity. How do states implement the Dublin rules and contribute thereby to a more equal and effective distribution? By creating a large-scale dataset based on Eurostat data from 2008 to 2023, the study compares Dublin requests, decisions, and transfers across all member states and builds novel indicators to measure the intensity and effectiveness of how states use the Dublin system. To our knowledge, this is the first comprehensive analysis of all Dublin data. A regression analysis with factors that influence member states' use of the Dublin rules reveals a complex picture of how states engage with the system. Initial results show that the Dublin system suffers from high asymmetry and low effectiveness with transfer rates decreasing despite high numbers of Dublin requests. The findings highlight the persistent lack of solidarity among member states, suggesting that the recently adopted rules may not be a game changer.



### *Social Convergence or Divergence? Assessing the Distributive Impact of the EU's New Socio-Economic Governance*

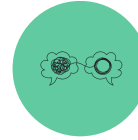
**Marko Vidakusic**

University of Rijeka

The European Union faces a dilemma: how to establish Collective Well-Being and democratic legitimacy in an era of rising social inequality and political contestation? While the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) set an ambitious vision, its implementation and institutional weight remain challenging. This research critically analyses the role of the Social Convergence Framework (SCF) as a key tool for rethinking governance in the socio-economic domain.

The SCF, established within the European Semester, is designed for the systematic monitoring of risks to upward social convergence. However, many critics argue that the framework represents a continuation of soft-law mechanisms, reinforcing the view that social policy will not fundamentally challenge the underlying economic priorities (Crespy, 2024). A fundamental question arises: What are the distributive consequences of the EU policies and recommendations based on this Framework?

The paper empirically investigates the distributive effect of SCF recommendations and the national policy responses triggered during the Second Phase Analysis in selected EU Member States where significant social imbalances have been identified. The focus is on the policy responses of the Member States (MS) and whether the integration of the SCF recommendations genuinely results in a reduction of social inequalities. The analysis assesses the extent to which multilevel governance succeeds in generating a significant distributive impact, thus evaluating its capacity to open sustainable "new paths towards prosperity."



### *Economic Democracy and Economic Security in an Operational Framework for Policy-Makers: Promoting Eudaimonic Well-being in the Wellbeing Economy*

**Stefano Turrini (1,3), Joscha Wirtz (2), Mario Biggeri (3), Imke Schmidt (1)**

Wuppertal Institut (1), JXW Strategy & Operations (2), Università di Firenze (3)

Over the past two decades, global economic growth has delivered limited social progress while aggravating ecological pressures, highlighting the need for socio-economic governance frameworks that move beyond GDP and prioritise human rights, equity, and ecological sustainability (Fanning & Raworth, 2025; Jiang, 2025; Richardson et al., 2023). Post-growth approaches such as the Wellbeing Economy (WE) argue that well-being depends on both social rights and ecological limits, yet operational policy frameworks capable of realising these aims remain scarce (Fioramonti, 2022; Mason & Büchs, 2023). Persistent political and institutional barriers further constrain the translation of post-growth principles into governance practice (Kallis, 2025; Angresius et al., 2025).

This paper—part of ongoing doctoral research—develops a socio-economic policy framework centred on two key principles: economic democracy and economic security. Economic democracy strengthens citizens' and communities' capacity to shape economic decisions, supporting fairness, inclusion, and accountability (Johanisová & Wolf, 2012; WEALL, 2022). Economic security ensures stable access to essential resources, reinforcing dignity, social rights, and the capacity of institutions to pursue long-term ecological and social objectives (Sen, 1993, 1999; WEALL, 2021). Together, these principles offer a governance architecture capable of advancing eudaimonic well-being.

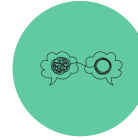
Adopting a theory-driven policy design approach (Howlett, 2011), the study examines their implementation in Wales, a member of the WEGo network. The national conversation “Wales We Want” (2014) and the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015) illustrate how participatory governance and security-oriented policies can be institutionalised within socio-economic systems (Howe, 2023; Hayden, 2024). The findings demonstrate that Wales' governance arrangements enhance social rights, strengthen participatory accountability, and create transferable lessons for European regions seeking to build equitable, sustainable, and rights-based socio-economic governance models.

### *The Role of Social Partners in the Revamped EU Socio-Economic Governance Architecture*

**Peter Kerckhofs (1), Mario Munta (2)**

Eurofund Ireland (1), Faculty of Political Science of Zagreb University (2)

Regulation 1263, adopted in April 2024, has significantly reshaped the EU's macroeconomic coordination process, the European Semester, introducing Medium-Term Fiscal Structural Plans (MTFSPs) to be submitted by national governments starting October 2024. This paper investigates the role of national social partners in the development of these MTFSPs and their engagement with the first 2025 national progress reports on implementation. It examines the significance of the European Semester fact-finding missions and explores how social partner participation in these meetings may enhance their influence, ownership, or acceptance of both country reports and country-specific recommendations within the broader Semester framework. Additionally, the paper assesses social partners' familiarity with the newly applied Social Convergence Framework (SCF) in the 2025 European Semester cycle and contrasts this with their overall knowledge of the Semester process. The paper presents the empirical research methodology followed by an analysis of key findings from 2024–25, highlighting initial insights from ongoing follow-up research in 2026 and how this longitudinal study contributes to understanding social partner engagement in EU economic governance.



Panel 14

## Reassessing the EU's legal instruments for sustainable prosperity

Time: Friday, 29 May, 2026, 9:00am - 10:30am

Location: Institut d'études européennes (ULB) - Room Geremek

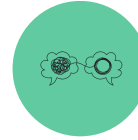
Chair: Chiara Armeni (Université libre de Bruxelles)

*A Cornerstone for the Sufficiency Transformation of the Common Agricultural Policy:  
Dispelling Two Persistent Fallacies*

**Myele Rouxel**

University of Eastern Finland

Agriculture is the major driver of the transgression of four out of the six planetary boundaries overstepped. To reduce its environmental impacts to an extent sufficient to return within a safe operating space for humanity, the European agri-food system needs to be radically transformed. Sufficiency solutions, that seek to secure human needs for food within ecological limits by relying on dietary change and agroecology, could provide an avenue for making the European agri-food system sustainable. However, these solutions may not fit well with the objectives of the CAP enshrined in the EU founding treaties, given their focus on production-side measures. On that basis, key stakeholders have argued that the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) cannot be reoriented away from the growth paradigm and towards sufficiency. This article challenges this assertion by investigating how deeply entrenched is the growth paradigm and what is the leeway for sufficiency within the legal architecture of the CAP. To do so, it relies on mixed methods and a two-pronged approach. Firstly, it analyses agricultural policy documents by the European Commission and economics literature to characterise the key features of the growth paradigm in the EU agri-food context. Secondly, it relies on doctrinal legal research methods and thematic interviews with key stakeholders to understand whether, to what extent and how the growth paradigm is embedded in the legal architecture of the CAP. It finds that there is space in the legal architecture of the CAP to reorient the CAP away from the growth paradigm and towards sufficiency.



### *New Paths to Environmental Sustainability: The 'Do No Significant Harm' as an Horizontal Principle in EU Governance*

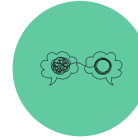
**Leila Kentache**

Università degli Studi di Torino

The European Union's pursuit of sustainable prosperity has increasingly relied on innovative modes of governance aimed at integrating environmental protection into the heart of economic policymaking. Since the launch of the European Green Deal, this integrative logic has expanded beyond traditional environmental legislation and has begun reshaping broader frameworks of EU intervention. A key illustration of this shift is the transversal role that environmental safeguards—most notably the 'Do no significant harm' (DNSH) principle—have assumed in steering the Union's collective response to the Covid-19 crisis.

Under the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), the DNSH principle developed from its original function in the EU Taxonomy Regulation, where it operated as a benchmark for sustainable private economic activities, to a binding conditionality for Member States' access to EU funding. This adaptation transformed DNSH into a tool of multilevel public governance, compelling national and sub-national administrations to embed environmental integrity across the full life cycle of publicly funded reforms and investments.

This contribution analyses the evolving role of DNSH within EU funding tools as a mechanism of horizontal integration, exploring how a funding-driven governance model can promote consistent environmental protection while simultaneously reshaping administrative practices within Member States. It explores the opportunities and tensions generated by this novel approach—particularly its capacity to support convergence towards the EU's climate objectives, and redefine the balance between EU oversight and domestic administrative autonomy.



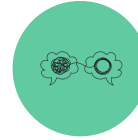
*European economic policy faced with the imperative of individual happiness. A Legal  
viewpoint on a political misunderstanding*

**Frederic Allemand**

University of Luxembourg

Established by the Maastricht Treaty, the Union's economic policy must contribute to the objectives of the Union as defined in Article 3 TEU, in particular the general objective of the well-being of European peoples and sustainable development. These general injunctions guide the various legal instruments through which European coordination of economic policies and the discipline of Member States' budgetary policies are exercised. Thus, the objective of sound public finances underlying the Stability and Growth Pact and the fiscal discipline regime of Article 126 TFEU constitutes "a means of strengthening price stability and strong, sustainable, and inclusive growth [...] in order to promote the achievement of the Union's objectives of sustainable growth and employment." However, a paradox arises as soon as we consider the "axiological neutrality" of economic policy with regard to the areas in which budgetary adjustments, investments, or structural reforms should be applied. The Union's competence is limited to coordinating national economic policies and defining socio-economic guidelines, the generality and non-binding nature of which respect the responsibility of Member States in this area. Budgetary discipline is based on compliance with macroeconomic objectives (nominal and structural balances of public accounts, outstanding public debt, debt servicing, GDP, gross fixed capital formation) that remain indifferent to the quality and socio-economic functions of public spending. that form the Stability and Growth Pact (spring 2024) encourages the Member states to give priority to certain policy areas. The financial assistance scheme for euro area Member States exempts public services deemed "essential" from the most stringent requirements of the adjustment programs. Singularly, the macroeconomic approach pursued by European economic policy leaves entirely unaddressed the issues of individual situations, the redistribution of added value between factors of production, social or fiscal justice, etc. These subjects, although impacted by European economic action, remain governed at the national and sub-national levels.

In this context, this paper proposes to examine the powers, instruments, and areas of European negotiation where individual situations could be taken into account in the making of economic policy. The analysis will focus specifically on the governance for setting structural objectives and medium-term budgetary and structural plans—two key instruments of European budgetary discipline.



Panel 15 **The EU as regulatory state in a global perspective**

Time: Friday, 29 May, 2026, 11:00am - 12:30pm

Location: Institut d'études européennes (ULB) - Room Geremek

Chair: Jane Arroyo (European University Institute)

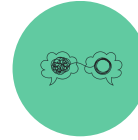
*The operationalisation of the EU's water regulation framework across four Member States: mapping and explaining shifting and fragmented institutional designs*

**Katarzyna Aleksandra Jancewicz**

Université de Liège

Despite the presence of an increasingly dense regulatory framework, water resource management within the European Union (EU) remains far from sustainable. According to the European Commission's 2019 study, the annual cost of Member States' failure to implement EU water legislation would amount to €9.3 billion. Notwithstanding the increasing number of EU rules, the implementation of water resource management is to be safeguarded at the (sub)national level. As a result, (sub)national institutions play a vital role in ensuring the effective application and enforcement of EU water rules.

Despite their key role in EU regulation, the structure and operations of those (sub)national institutions responsible for applying and enforcing EU water law have largely remained unexplored. Addressing that gap, this paper will identify, map, and compare the legal design, operational capacities, and cooperative features of the institutions responsible for EU water law in France, Poland, Portugal, and Romania. Specifically, the paper will highlight the extent of fragmentation underlying those frameworks by identifying a variety of 'competent authorities' and their differentiated, and, at times, uncoordinated, regulatory powers. Building on that analysis, the paper will then examine and conceptualise the potential for EU law to address significant national fragmentation more directly by encouraging or imposing more integrated enforcement structures at either national or EU levels.



*Between Green Ambitions and Strategic Interests: Unpacking Policy (In)Coherence in EU  
Mineral Value Chain Regulation*

**Marta Paricio Montesinos**

Vrije Universiteit Brussel, University of Helsinki

Recent geopolitical tensions and the acceleration of the low-carbon transition have intensified pressures for extractivism. In this context, debates on responsible mining of critical raw materials have gained renewed attention, especially regarding socio-environmental and human rights impacts in politically unstable regions (Church & Crawford, 2020; Kumar, Höffken & Pols, 2021). The EU has sought to position itself as a leader in corporate sustainability by placing supply chain justice and corporate accountability at the centre of the energy transition (Mastini et al., 2021). Its ambition is to ensure that materials essential for decarbonization are sourced in socially and environmentally just ways while securing a stable supply of critical raw materials (Rietveld et al., 2022). Yet the EU's regulatory framework governing mineral value chains—including the Conflict Minerals Regulation, the Batteries Regulation, the Critical Raw Materials Act, and the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD)—reveals overlapping mandates and persistent incoherences. Drawing on the policy coherence framework by Nilsson et al. (2012), and understanding coherence as the alignment of instruments and objectives toward a broader goal (Cejudo & Michel, 2017; Ahlström & Sjøfjell, 2021), this paper conducts a qualitative policy analysis of these instruments in terms of their objectives, design, and implementation. The analysis identifies inconsistencies in underlying assumptions, enforcement logics, and compliance mechanisms that weaken overall coherence toward sustainability. It also shows the replication of similar challenges across frameworks, including weak state monitoring, limited stakeholder participation, and difficulties in establishing corporate liability (Schilling-Vacafior & Lenschow, 2023). These findings raise questions about whether these instruments can function as complementary components of a coherent sustainability puzzle, or whether they ultimately reflect distinct geoeconomic and securitization interests.

*Reimagining the Economic Constitution of the EU: Resilience, Circularity, and the  
Pursuit of Sustainable Prosperity*

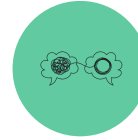
**Pauline Phoa, Sybe de Vries**

Utrecht University

The European Union's legal-economic framework was built around principles of market integration, efficiency, and growth. Yet accelerating ecological degradation, resource scarcity, and widening social inequalities increasingly expose the fragility of this growth-oriented model. Recent geopolitical and economic shocks - such as the energy and food crises following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the restructuring of global value chains, and the EU's renewed focus on competitiveness in the Draghi report - underscore the need to rethink the constitutional foundations of European economic law.

This paper argues that the pursuit of prosperity in the EU must be decoupled from the logic of perpetual growth and reoriented towards long-term sustainability, resilience, and inclusiveness. We propose a reconstruction of European economic law by combining classic constitutional and public economic law principles (freedom, equality, solidarity and democratic pluralism) with two new ones, namely resilience and circularity. These principles enable the EU to integrate ecological limits, social justice, and participatory governance into its economic constitution.

Methodologically, the paper employs a legal-constitutional analysis informed by ecological economics, philosophy, history, and political theory to demonstrate how current interpretations of internal market, state aid, and competition law constrain the transition towards a just and circular economy. It concludes by outlining a framework for a "constitutional ecology" of economic law - embedding stewardship, solidarity, and intergenerational justice as foundational elements of European prosperity.



### *The Competitive Impact of Environmental Standards on European Companies – Economic and Ecological Integration Through the Lens of Globalisation*

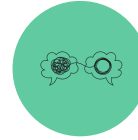
**Paco Jimenez**

Université de Pau et des pays de l'Adour

The European Union's environmental policy has expanded at an unprecedented pace with the Green Deal, turning climate action into a central pillar of European economic governance. This transformation confronts European companies with a dual integration dynamic—economic and environmental. Far from being a mere regulatory burden, this shift requires firms to rethink their business models while contributing to the emergence of a distinct European economic identity grounded in sustainability. Yet a structural tension persists: while environmental challenges are global in nature, the competitive effects of EU norms are primarily felt by firms exposed to international competition.

This paper examines how the proliferation of environmental standards—carbon pricing, sustainable product requirements, due diligence obligations and circularity rules—simultaneously reshapes the EU's ecological trajectory and the competitive landscape for European companies. Beyond this analysis, the research develops an original impact-assessment methodology designed to evaluate, in an integrated manner, both the environmental effectiveness of EU norms and their implications for competitiveness. This methodology combines legal, economic and structural indicators to assess the proportionality, coherence and potential extraterritorial reach of EU environmental regulation.

The study argues that environmental integration is becoming a key driver of the transformation of the European economic model, provided that robust evaluative tools exist to anticipate competitive distortions and ensure a just transition. By linking regulatory design, industrial strategy and a dedicated impact-assessment methodology, this contribution sheds light on new pathways towards prosperity in the European Union and provides concrete analytical instruments for aligning climate ambition with economic realities.



*Panel 16* **Towards a genuine EU defence policy**

*Time: Friday, 29 May, 2026, 11:00am - 12:30pm*

*Location: Institut d'études européennes (ULB) - Room Spaak*

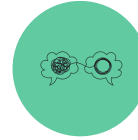
**Chair:** Chloé Brière (Université libre de Bruxelles)

*Rearming Europe: Domestic Governance Ecosystems and the Demand for European  
Defence Integration*

**Antonio Calcara (2), Scott Hamilton (1), Dirk de Bièvre (1)**

University of Antwerp (1), Vrije Universiteit Brussel (2)

In a very short period of time, amid tensions with both the EU's most direct military threat and its strongest ally, calls to rearmament have started echoing across the political spectrum. While this objective is embraced across member states, there is far less agreement concerning who the EU should arm, and how. More specifically, the EU member states diverge in their support for outright EU-level defence cooperation versus mere intergovernmental coordination of complementary national procurement. In this paper, we investigate the domestic institutional origins of political demand for European defence integration. We argue that variation in governance ecosystems—whether public or private—explains preferences for cooperation (centralized EU-level resources) or competition (intergovernmental control). In public governance systems, where strong formal and informal ties between the defence sector and the state prevail, firms can overcome collective action problems and mobilize political demand for EU-level cooperation to secure industrial advantages. In contrast, private governance systems, where such ties are weaker and state discretion is more pronounced, are more likely to generate demand for coordination, as firms pressure governments to retain national control. We test this argument using a discourse network analysis of defence policy debates in France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Poland. By analysing patterns of narrative congruence across political, bureaucratic, and industrial actors, we assess whether governance ecosystems shape political demand more powerfully than standard IPE expectations that assume a shared sectoral preference among firms in the defence industry. This paper contributes to understanding how domestic governance structures condition preference formation and contestation in EU defence policy.

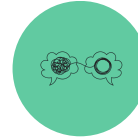


**THE EU'S MUTUAL DEFENCE CLAUSE: LEGAL AND STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS  
ON ARTICLE 42(7) TEU IN AN AGE OF RENEWED MILITARY THREATS**

**Federica Fazio**

Dublin City University, College of Europe

EU institutions have expanded their involvement in defence since 2016, prompted by Brexit and Donald Trump's first presidential victory. This trend has become even more pronounced since the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. NATO remains central to Europe's territorial defence, as evidenced by Finland and Sweden's accession, yet there also exists legal basis for the EU to play a role. Article 42(7) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) obliges Member States to assist each other in the event of armed aggression, echoing Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty (NAT). This provision has received limited attention from legal scholars. With the war in Ukraine intensifying, concerns over Trump undermining Article 5 NAT and rising risks of military and hybrid attacks on Europe, it is crucial to understand how the EU's mutual defence clause would be implemented. This includes its interplay with the EU's solidarity clause in Article 222 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) and NATO's own mutual defence clause. To this end, this article undertakes a legal and strategic analysis of Article 42(7) TEU. Following an introduction that outlines the topic and methodology, Section 1 offers a legal perspective, while Section 2 a strategic perspective. Section 3 concludes that, while significant progress has been made, the EU is not yet in a position to credibly threaten the use of force in the exercise of collective defence.



*The Next MFF and EU's defense spending: Integrating "European Public Goods" into the  
Union's budgetary architecture*

**Rosalba Famà**

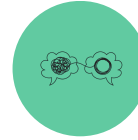
Bocconi University

The proposal for the 2028-2034 MFF emerges in a profoundly altered geopolitical environment, marked by Russia's continued aggression against Ukraine, heightened security threats, and the EU's post-pandemic expanded recourse to common debt. Against this backdrop, the Commission calls for a more "political budget", where defence becomes a central investment priority.

This paper analyses the legal design of the new spending architecture - most notably the European Competitiveness Fund, the "National Regional Partnership Plans" and the strengthened security objectives into the Connecting Europe Facility - and applies the European Public Good (EPG) lens to the forthcoming MFF. It assesses whether the proposed MFF embeds EPGs more explicitly and argues that these developments reflect a shift toward conceptualising defence as an EPG.

Understood by economists as goods where European-level intervention offers greater effectiveness and efficiency gains than purely national approaches, the paper identifies a legal anchoring for EPGs in the Treaty principles of subsidiarity, proportionality, and solidarity. In the field of defense, subsidiarity supports EU spending where Member States cannot individually ensure adequate capabilities; proportionality requires that Union interventions correspond to the scale of contemporary threats; and solidarity underpins the shared financial responsibility necessary to strengthen EU collective preparedness.

Ultimately, the paper evaluates how the new MFF proposal reshapes the place of EPGs in the Union's long-term budget - with defense being a paradigmatic example of how EPGs can reorient the EU budget toward strategic capacity-building - and considers whether this approach signals a deeper transformation in EU budgetary governance.



### *Strategic uncertainty as a stress test: Differentiated integration and democratic legitimacy in EU defence governance*

**Salma Rhilane**

Youth Policy Center

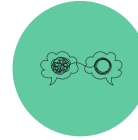
This paper examines how periods of strategic uncertainty in transatlantic relations function as stress tests for the European Union's multi-level governance in the field of security and defence. Rather than focusing on the United States itself, the analysis treats fluctuating U.S. security commitments as one instance of a broader external uncertainty dynamic that reveals how authority, coordination, and legitimacy are negotiated between EU institutions and member states.

Anchored in multi-level governance and differentiated integration theory, the paper asks: How does external strategic uncertainty reshape both the distribution of competences and the democratic legitimacy of emerging EU defence governance?

Methodologically, the study combines qualitative analysis of key initiatives (ReArm Europe Plan, SAFE Facility, PESCO, Strategic Compass) with process-tracing of European Council negotiations (2022–2025) and secondary analysis of Eurobarometer data on public attitudes toward EU defence cooperation.

Findings show that uncertainty accelerates defence integration at the supranational level while simultaneously reinforcing divergent strategic preferences among member states, particularly along an East–West axis. This produces differentiated integration rather than uniform convergence. Moreover, while public support for EU-level defence cooperation is growing, legitimacy remains uneven, shaping the pace and scope of integration.

The paper argues that sustainable strategic autonomy requires not only capability-building but democratic consent and transparent governance, particularly as defence integration intersects with fiscal priorities and social cohesion.



Panel 17 **The European Union and today's democratic challenges**

Time: Friday, 29 May, 2026, 1:30pm - 3:00pm

Location: Institut d'études européennes (ULB) - Room Geremek

Chair: Alvaro Oleart (Université libre de Bruxelles)

*International election observation and European democracy*

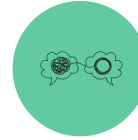
**Régis Dandoy**

Universidad San Francisco de Quito

This paper examines how international election observation can contribute to the European Union's search for renewed prosperity by strengthening democratic governance across its multi-level polity. As stated in the conference call, prosperity in the EU is inseparable from democratic governance. Yet the past two decades have witnessed growing contestation of liberal democracy, rising polarization, and a lower trust in public institutions. This paper argues that international election observation offers a valuable but underexplored tool for enhancing governance and electoral integrity within the Union and its neighbourhood, thereby supporting the EU's broader objectives of stability, legitimacy, and prosperity.

Drawing on original data on international election observation missions deployed in EU member states, EU candidate states, and Eastern Partnership countries, the paper evaluates how election observation can strengthen transparency and mitigate democratic backsliding. Concretely, it investigates all election observation missions deployed by the European Union (including the European Parliament delegations), the OSCE (including the OSCE PA) and the Council of Europe (including the CoE PACE and the CoE CLRAE) in those countries since 2000 and measures its impact on the quality of democracy and of the electoral processes (based on V-Dem indices). These quantitative analyses will be controlled by a series of variables such as the type of regime, size, wealth, and the nature of relations with the EU (membership, candidate, partnership).

The paper argues that integrating elements of international election observation into EU democratic governance could help address the crises of legitimacy that threaten the Union's capacity to deliver prosperity. It also examines the EU's dual role as both a promoter and potential subject of election observation, exploring the institutional and political implications of incorporating international election observation mechanisms into the EU's own multi-level governance architecture.



*Rebalancing Voices: Making Digital Participation Travel Across Europe's Governance*

Stack

**Gianluca Sgueo**

Brussels School of Governance

Across the EU, headline instruments - the European Citizens' Initiative, the Commission's "Have Your Say" consultations, and the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE) - mobilised participation yet often failed to carry inputs into decisions: consultations tended to arrive late in the policy cycle with thin feedback, and, even eighteen months on, CoFoE left procedures for integrating proposals unclear.

The proposed paper aims at explaining why by tracing a mismatch between the aesthetics of consumer technology and the logics of public law. Citizens enter with four consumer-grade expectations: speed (near-instant response), simplicity (frictionless tasks), singularity (tailored experience), and gratuity (zero perceived cost).

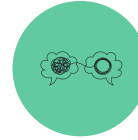
Public institutions, by contrast, must optimise for five qualities: inclusivity (representativeness over convenience), longevity (records and commitments over moments), generality (rules that scale beyond cases), reliability (verifiable procedures), and publicity (traceable openness).

The consequence is a recurrent "digital undemocratic" paradox - dazzling interfaces with disappointing civic outcomes - amplified in multi-level settings. A second driver is imbalance: in current platforms the civic voice remains structurally weaker than organised industrial interests, requiring the public decision-maker to actively rebalance.

The central claim of the proposed paper is that prosperity-enhancing, legitimate co-creation depends less on the volume of engagement than on redesigning governance across three constraints - namely: (1) structural (capacities and bureaucratic inertia); (2) procedural (coordination across actors/levels); (3) and cultural (low incentives to change).

Concretely, rebalancing means enforceable feedback duties (who considered what, when), minimum publicity standards for each step of the policy journey, design choices that privilege the five public-law qualities, and capability-building at EU, national and local levels to sustain these practices.

The proposed paper aims at addressing four open questions: first, which feedback obligations are legally and operationally feasible across the EU governance stack; second, how to sequence capability-building to support them; third, how to rationalise overlapping instruments to reduce harmful uncertainty; fourth, which interaction-centric metrics best indicate democratic value beyond clicks.



*Governing at a Distance: Policy Coordination and Implementation of EU Policies in  
Dutch and French Overseas Countries and Territories.*

**Shana Suzanne Adriana Atangana Bekono**

The Hague University of Applied Sciences

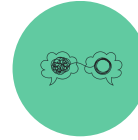
French and Dutch overseas countries and territories (OCTs) exist at the intersection of multiple governance frameworks. They operate under their own local government structures, maintain constitutional links with EU member states, and have an association relationship with the EU. Consequently, ensuring effective EU policy coordination and implementation in these territories poses ongoing challenges for the EU, member states, and OCTs themselves.

This paper, part of a PhD project at The Hague University of Applied Sciences supervised by Dr. Mendeltje van Keulen (professor and Jean Monnet Chair), investigates whether coordination gaps represent significant barriers to effective policy implementation or whether existing mechanisms adequately address the constitutional and geographic realities of these territories.

Through exploratory research combining literature review and semi-structured interviews with officials operating within OCT governance systems, the study examines three key questions :

- What multilevel governance mechanisms exist for EU policy coordination between OCTs and national governments?
- How are OCTs involved, formally and informally, in shaping new policies at both national and EU levels (European Commission, Council, and Parliament)?
- What strategies do OCTs employ to influence EU policy-making?

By examining OCTs as models of flexible governance, this research analyzes the dynamics of democratic representation and multi-level coordination between the EU and its Overseas territories. The findings contribute to broader scholarly discourse on alternative governance models for achieving collective prosperity across the EU while respecting territorial diversity.



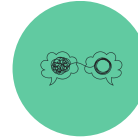
*The Governance of Truth in the Green Transition: Climate Disinformation,  
Greenwashing, and the Need for a New EU Framework to Safeguard Democratic  
Participation and Collective Prosperity.*

**Hugo Alexandre**

This paper investigates how climate-related disinformation and greenwashing undermine civic participation in the EU's green transition and, by extension, threaten the Union's capacity to deliver long-term, sustainable prosperity. While effective climate action requires broad societal support, research shows that disinformation campaigns—conducted by fossil fuel actors, third-country governments, and corporate PR networks—distort public perceptions, erode trust, polarise debate, and weaken citizens' ability and willingness to support ambitious environmental governance. Simultaneously, greenwashing practices—including unverifiable sustainability claims and misleading corporate practices—create informational asymmetries that reduce democratic accountability and hinder behavioural change among consumers and political constituencies.

The paper asks: How do climate disinformation and greenwashing affect civic participation in the EU's green transition, and what governance innovations could mitigate these threats? Using a mixed-methods approach, the paper maps the mechanisms through which misinformation affects participation and evaluates the adequacy of existing EU instruments, including the Digital Services Act, Green Claims Directive, CSRD/ESRS standards, and climate literacy initiatives.

The paper argues that current EU efforts treat disinformation and greenwashing largely as consumer-protection or digital-market issues, rather than structural threats to environmental governance and democratic participation. It proposes a governance paradigm-shift centred on transparency, traceability, accountability, and citizen-empowerment. Policy avenues include: enforceable EU-wide sustainability labelling; independent verification systems; mandatory traceability of corporate climate claims; sanctions for systematic offenders; and green-literacy and media-literacy programs to strengthen civic resilience. The paper concludes that re-conceptualizing climate truthfulness as a governance imperative is essential for ensuring democratic participation, ambitious climate action, and long-term European prosperity.



Panel 18 **New pathways for EU industrial policy**

Time: Friday, 29 May, 2026, 1:30pm - 3:00pm

Location: Institut d'études européennes (ULB) - Room Spaak

Chair: Emmanuel Slautsky (Université libre de Bruxelles)

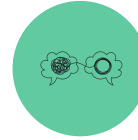
*The New EU Industrial Policy: Evolving Governance Between Innovations and  
Constraints*

**Paolo Recaldini**

Université libre de Bruxelles

In less than a decade, the European Union (EU) laid the foundations for a more proactive EU industrial policy, moving away from a market-making and regulatory approach, to embrace an increasingly interventionist, market-developing stance. A new coherent paradigm, characterizable as New EU Industrial Policy, is developing, despite the constraints set in the Treaties. This emphasises the need to reassess and rethink the governance of the EU industrial policy, particularly concerning industrial priority-setting, coordination across the EU's multilevel governance system, and adequate implementing instruments.

This paper seeks to examine three tenets of the New EU Industrial Policy, that have emerged despite existing constraints: industrial strategizing, forms of industrial intervention, and governance modalities. Firstly, it presents the emergence of a cross-institutional industrial debate, reliant on the European Commission's strategies, but extending to the European Council and the European Parliament. Secondly, it examines the recent industrial measures under the New EU Industrial Policy. The paper examines the methods used to surpass the Treaty-set boundaries, in particular the innovative use of legal bases and the multi-policy industrial approach; and it looks at the initiatives for specific industrial sectors (in particular, AI and raw materials) to show how the EU has undertaken a heterogeneous industrial approach. Thirdly, it explores frictions in the current governance structure and the innovations proposed by the Commission, especially the Competitiveness Coordination Tool anticipated in the Competitiveness Compass. It concludes that analysing and recognising these developments is essential for the effective evolution of the EU industrial policy governance.



### *The Politics and Practices of Joint Procurement in the European Union*

**Philipp Genschel, Jule Meyer**

Universität Bremen

How has joint procurement evolved over time? While recent reports by Draghi, Letta, and Niinistö have pushed joint procurement into the spotlight as a strategic solution for boosting European productivity and competitiveness, the underlying policy concept is far from new. This paper offers the first comprehensive mapping of joint procurement in the EU, examining how the practice has developed, transformed, and left its imprint in EU primary and secondary law from 1950 to 2025. Using a specialized EUR-Lex dataset covering more than 400 acts, decisions, and regulations (final count pending), the analysis traces every instance of joint procurement in the EU. For each, it unpacks the powers exercised by Member States and the EU itself, as well as the rationale driving joint purchasing. The results show that joint procurement does not follow a uniform model; rather, it has evolved to meet the needs of diverse policy areas, ranging from early arrangements under Euratom and the ECSC, through hybrid regimes in Joint Undertakings, to serving as a crisis response tool within the Union Civil Protection framework. In each decade, the balance of competence and control between Member States and the EU differs, reflecting variations in the function of joint procurement. These findings challenge the notion of joint procurement as a recent innovation, instead demonstrating it as an evolving, context-dependent policy practice. The paper thereby provides a conceptual foundation for systematically studying EU joint procurement across multiple sectors.

### *European Financial Integration through Joint Procurement: Potential and Legal Challenges*

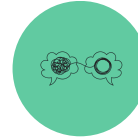
**Saverio Della Corte**

European University Institute

In recent years, the European Union has increasingly coordinated the acquisition of critical goods by Member States through various joint procurement (JP) mechanisms. A centralised procedure for purchasing anti-COVID-19 vaccines was established in 2020 under the EU Vaccine Strategy. Since then, additional JP frameworks have been created to procure natural gas and defence capabilities in response to the war in Ukraine. Joint purchasing is also expanding into industrial policy sectors, including hydrogen and critical raw materials.

Although the 2024 financial regulation provided common rules for JP procedures, the legal bases, degree of Member State involvement, and extent of centralisation within EU institutions vary significantly. Yet JP procedures share a core function: they steer national expenditure through institutional coordination and financial incentives, particularly in areas where the Union has limited formal competence, such as public health, defence, and energy. Against this background, this paper examines JP as an emerging instrument of financial integration.

The paper's central thesis is that, when viewed as a tool of financial integration, JP raises several legal challenges. First, JP advances integration through contractual rather than deliberative processes. Member States negotiate procurement terms according to their bargaining power and individual priorities, which can undermine the principle of equality. Second, JP relies on event-driven governance structures that may fall short in terms of transparency and accountability. Third, by reinforcing the Union's collective position in global competition for critical resources, JP may inadvertently encourage new forms of economic nationalism, potentially conflicting with the EU's legal commitment to international cooperation.

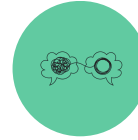


### *Greening or Competing to Survive? International Pressures and Ideas in the EU's Green Growth Strategy*

**Jane Arroyo**

European University Institute

The recent intensification of global competition in clean technologies, often described as a green tech race, has prompted the EU to accelerate its green industrial policy efforts. While the EU's reliance on green growth is not new, these geoeconomic developments are providing renewed justification for treating the climate crisis as an economic and strategic, while increasingly leaving aside traditional environmental policies. How such international pressures actually shape the parameters of the EU's green growth strategy? While recent studies highlighted the role that changes in the global political economy play in shaping the EU's industrial strategy, they have failed to explain the choice of policy options among more transformative alternatives. This paper investigates the role of economic ideas about the working of the economy in shaping the EU's reaction to international pressures, from problem identification to policy formulation. In a corpus of documents, it traces how these ideas have been mobilized by policymakers and stakeholders to make sense of the interpretive ambiguity emerging from changes in the global political economy between the Paris Agreement (2015) to recent simplification initiatives adopted by the Commission (2025). I show that while alternatives exist in the form of transformative economic paradigms, these are given little space for discussion due to the entrenchment of a specific set of economic ideas relating to the environment, growth and prosperity, and global competition. By doing so, this paper contributes to better understand how the boundaries of the EU's green growth strategy and path to prosperity are defined.



Panel 19 **Labour and skills in the EU Market and Polity**

Time: Friday, 29 May, 2026, 1:30pm - 3:00pm

Location: Institut d'études européennes (ULB) - Room Kant

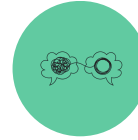
Chair: Bastian Kenn (Université libre de Bruxelles)

*Industrial Policy through Skills Governance: A Study of the Political Economy of the EU's  
Union of Skills*

**Alina Jasmin Felder-Stindt (1), Cecilia Ivardi Ganapini (2)**

Universitat Pompeu Fabra (1), University of St. Gallen (2)

In the wake of technological change and demographic decline, European countries are deploying skills policies to source high skills under the broad rubric of industrial policy. Despite the national anchoring of education and training policies, these skills policies create transnational skills areas where skills move following needs and shortages. In this paper, we study the transnational politics of industrial policy in the field of skills. We explore a most likely policy in a most likely case of transnational skill formation: the Union of Skills as recently launched in the European Union (EU). We expect cleavages to emerge on two levels: first, between countries on the periphery that experience brain drain as countries at the core poach skills; second, within the same country, between employers in need of skilled labour and workers' representatives whose work conditions and wages are threatened by the influx of foreign skills. Putting supranational governance theory and comparative political economy in dialogue, we critically examine the Union of Skills as both a policy innovation and a political project for prosperity responding to critical junctures (e.g. the Covid-19 pandemic) and to transition processes affecting the knowledge economy. Building on process tracing and critical policy analysis, the paper reveals the key role of timing in fostering transnational skills policy, as shown by the rise in progressive language and managerial techniques deployed to appease tensions arising within cleavages and offer side-payments. We concur that the EU's geopolitical turn was key in bridging divides between and within countries in skills governance.



*Power Resources and the Politicisation of Unemployment during the 'Golden Age' of  
Social Europe*

**Stephen Gaffney**

Université libre de Bruxelles

Between the late 1980s and the close of the millennium, the development of the European Union, and the economic and social impacts associated with it, brought together a loose but co-ordinated trans-European network of traditional and 'radical' trade unions, representatives of social democratic and socialist political parties, trade union orientated and 'horizontalist' unemployed activist groups, and faith-based organisations (among others). By politicising the high levels of unemployment found across Western and Southern Europe, these actors sought to contest de-industrialisation and the retrenchment and reformation of their national welfare states, and to push for a more 'social' European Union in response. Drawing on archival materials, this paper applies the 'power resources approach' to three separate but networked expressions of this multi-scalar movement: the European Network of the Unemployed (1984-1998); the European Conventions for Full Employment (1997 & 1999); and the European Marches against Unemployment, Job Insecurity and Social Exclusion (1997 & 1999). In doing so it documents how the various groups behind these initiatives came together over time to harness both 'institutional' and 'associational' power in a manner that was novel at the time.

The paper then takes stock of the 'failure' of these efforts. Ultimately, this movement rapidly dissipated and European integration took a path starkly opposed to the aspirations of those involved. A critical reappraisal of this historical defeat allows us to draw lessons of relevance to contemporary labour and social movements seeking to advance social rights at the European level.

*Regulating grey zones: the EU's traineeship directive and the limits of harmonization in  
labour law*

**Sven Schreurs**

University of Amsterdam

Debates over the European Union's role in labour market governance have long centred on the tension between social rights and economic integration. While earlier scholarship depicted EU labour law as constrained by limited competences and political will, recent initiatives – including the European Pillar of Social Rights and directives on transparent working conditions and platform work – signal a gradual strengthening of the Union's social acquis. Yet these advances have not resolved a deeper structural dilemma: how to extend protection across increasingly diverse and non-standard forms of work within a fragmented legal order that lacks a single definition of 'worker'. This paper situates the Traineeship Directive within these theoretical debates, analysing it as a test case for the EU's capacity to regulate legal 'grey zones'. Despite the growing prevalence of internships and traineeships, most Member States lack coherent regulatory frameworks, resulting in uneven protections and precarity among young workers. The directive's attempt to impose minimum standards has, however, provoked both political resistance and technical challenges concerning effectiveness, enforcement and EU competence. Combining doctrinal legal analysis with process-tracing based on legislative documents, media coverage and elite interviews, the paper examines the formulation, negotiation and implications of the directive. In doing so, it illuminates the evolving governance of non-standard work in the EU and the enduring limits of harmonization within its multi-level social model.