



Ose
European
Social
Observatory

2024 Activity Report

Observatoire social européen

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This 2024 Activity Report is the fruit of a collaborative effort. We would like to thank OSE Director Slavina Spasova, Senior Researcher Jessica Martini and Communications Officer Daniela Roberts for the time they dedicated to bringing this publication to life, as well as to the entire OSE team for their meticulous contributions. This year's edition also underwent a significant makeover, with improvements in the overall flow, structure, and visual presentation, enhancing both clarity and accessibility.

Foreword

The year 2024 was one of continued transformation and renewed energy at the European Social Observatory (OSE). It was a year that challenged us on multiple fronts, but also brought fresh opportunities for connection, renewal and reflection on our role of applied research centre within a changing European landscape. As Europe itself grapples with new geopolitical and economic currents, our Observatory has likewise navigated transformative shifts—embracing challenges that have sharpened our collective resolve and broadened our horizons.

In 2024, we continued along the path set by the pivotal transitions of 2023, when Bart Vanhercke departed to assume the role of Research Director at the European Trade Union Institute, and Slavina Spasova was appointed Director by unanimous vote of the Board. That same year, we bade a sincere farewell to Françoise Verri, whose forty years of exemplary financial and administrative stewardship set a benchmark for dedication. We are deeply grateful to each of these colleagues for their vision and steadfast commitment, which laid the groundwork for the chapter we now write.

In 2024, we embarked upon another momentous milestone: relocating to new premises in the very heart of Brussels. The relocation was a major undertaking for the administrative team, requiring flexibility, cooperation, and collective determination. Today, we are proud to be working in a space that reflects who we are becoming — dynamic, collaborative, and open to the future. Far more than a change of address, this move symbolises our aspiration to foster a more open, collaborative and forward-looking environment, allowing us to stay better connected with key stakeholders at the heart of Brussels.

Under the aegis of our new leadership, we undertook a deliberate process of team renewal. Like many organisations, we experienced staff transitions, welcoming new colleagues and bidding farewell to others. These decisions, while sometimes difficult, were guided by a clear ambition: to align the team with a renewed commitment to excellence, high-quality work, and responsiveness to a fast-evolving policy environment. Under the new directorship, strengthening our internal capacity has been a key priority — essential to delivering on the OSE’s long-standing mission. These shifts have not been easy but enriched our team, offering moments to reflect on our identity and to strengthen our collective capacity. The OSE’s stability and adaptability throughout this period speaks to the commitment and professionalism of our staff.

Governance was also reinvigorated in 2024. The Board of Directors welcomed several distinguished new members, and the OSE had the honour of electing a new President, Oleg Bernaz. Collaborating closely throughout 2024, the Director and President have woven tighter bonds of cooperation, aligning our efforts in service of the OSE’s mission. We would also like to express our deep gratitude to Marc Sapir, who has been our President for the past ten years. His unwavering commitment, strategic vision, and thoughtful guidance have been instrumental in shaping the direction of the OSE. In addition to his leadership, his ability to foster dialogue and cohesion within the organisation has left a lasting and valued legacy.

Amid these structural developments, the OSE launched its first Afterwork gatherings—a new forum for informal yet substantive exchange between academics, policymakers, and stakeholders. These events provide a space to discuss key initiatives and pressing topics at EU level, attracting a diverse and engaged audience from across the policy and research communities.

These events have, indeed, become key occasions to discuss pressing EU-level initiatives and challenges, including some key events in 2024. During this year, the European Union embarked upon a fresh political cycle, marked by the European Parliament elections in June and the reappointment of President von der Leyen at the helm of the Commission. Debates on

competitiveness and security have come to the fore, prompting renewed scrutiny of the social and research agendas.

Despite these shifts, important steps were taken to uphold and advance Social Europe, such as key legislation on platform work. Key moments included the Belgian Presidency's leadership on the European Pillar of Social Rights, the Val Duchesse Summit on social dialogue, the High-Level Conference on the European Pillar of Social Rights in La Hulpe and high-level events on just transition and social investment.

At the same time, the revised EU economic governance framework has generated renewed discussions about the scope for social policies in times of fiscal consolidation and geopolitical tension. The crucial question, therefore, is: can the EU balance security and competitiveness without sidelining its social commitments and, more broadly, the EU social model? This question lies at the heart of our analysis, as we explore the challenges and potential trade-offs facing Social Europe in the years ahead (¹).

Our work at OSE is more vital than ever in monitoring these developments, encouraging the integration of social considerations, and highlighting the risks when Social Europe is under threat. As ever, the OSE has engaged with these policy shifts through research, dialogue and critical analysis. In ways both visible and behind the scenes, we have continued to support evidence-based policymaking, engage in forward-looking debates, and contribute to shaping the social dimension of European integration.

On behalf of the entire OSE Team, I would like to express our heartfelt thanks for your enduring interest and support.

Slavina Spasova
Director

1. This section draws on Sabato S., Ghailani D. and Spasova S. (2025) Conclusions: Social Europe amidst the security and competitiveness paradigms, in Sabato S., Ghailani D. and Spasova S. (eds.) Social policy in the European Union: state of play 2024, Social Europe amidst the security and competitiveness paradigms, ETUI and OSE.

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1. THE OSE IN A NUTSHELL

The European Social Observatory (Observatoire social européen, OSE) is a Brussels-based not-for-profit research centre specialised in the social dimension of the European Union (EU). Its mission is to analyse the impact of European integration on social and employment policies both at EU level and within Member States. It does this by conducting comparative research and formulating policy proposals. With its forward-looking approach, it operates as a think tank, identifying issues as they emerge – from the impact of the internal market on healthcare systems and social protection, and the social challenges associated with the Economic and Monetary Union, to the Green Deal and the social and employment consequences of digitalisation.

Following a decision of the federal government in 2013, the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office has recognised the OSE as a ‘Scientific Institution’. As a result of its vibrant research activity, the OSE has been consistently ranked (by the University of Pennsylvania) between 2016 and 2020 (last available report) among the top 100 social policy think tanks worldwide ⁽²⁾.

Founded in 1984, the OSE draws on a broad network of Belgian and European public authorities, think tanks, the scientific community, European and national trade unions and civil society. The OSE has likewise acted as coordinator or partner in a variety of European projects and is actively involved in major networks of academic excellence funded under Horizon Europe and its predecessors. The OSE works closely with the European trade union movement (ETUC), the Belgian Federation of Christian Unions (CSC) and civil society organisations (including the Social Platform), and these are represented on its governing bodies.

1.1 Goals

The OSE’s main goal is to produce independent and state-of-the-art critical analysis of the social dimension of European integration. This implies, more concretely, that we:

- Conduct research and formulate policy proposals on the impact of European integration on social and employment policies both at EU level and within the Member States, as well as in neighbouring countries.
 - Assess EU-level initiatives alongside national reforms in all Member States and key neighbouring countries.
 - Examine trends in labour markets, welfare systems, social protection and inclusion, identifying both opportunities and challenges.
- Provide an ongoing platform for discussion for a wide range of stakeholders, especially trade union organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).
 - Organise seminars, workshops and online forums where trade unions, NGOs, academics and practitioners exchange views.
 - Since 2024, host Afterwork events bringing together experts and practitioners to debate EU social policies.
 - Provide a unique forum for dialogue on the current state and the future of social Europe, engaging with a variety of national and EU stakeholders, decisionmakers and scholars.
- Disseminate project results through diverse communication channels.

2. Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program (TTCSP) of the University of Pennsylvania
https://repository.upenn.edu/think_tanks/.

- Disseminate the results of the projects widely through various communication tools. We publish reports, policy briefs and briefing notes on our website, all accessible free of charge.
- Leverage newsletters, social-media updates and in-house multimedia to reach policymakers, social partners and the wider public.

1.2 Funding

The OSE is funded from a variety of sources, which include:

- **European and international institutions.**
- **Belgian federal authorities**, including notably the longstanding collaboration with the Belgian National Institute for Health and Disability Insurance (NIHDI), the Federal Public Service Social Security and the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office (BELSPO).
- **Belgian regional authorities**, including from the Brussels regional employment office (Actiris).
- **Trade union-related funding**, including from the Belgian Confederation of Christian Trade Unions (CSC/ACV) and the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI).
- Other resources, including various academic collaborations, training and consultancy work.

1.3 OSE's big move to a new office

Since February 2024, the OSE is located in Nordic House, a modern building in the centre of the European district of Brussels. After having spent 40 years in the same building, the organisation had to relocate – bringing with it four decades of history. The move itself was characterised by logistical complexity and close collaboration among team members.

Identifying and Selecting the New Premises

The process began with a thorough assessment of the office real estate market, conducted by Benoît Malice and Rita Tomioka. Various options were considered, based on strict criteria: accessibility, budget, quality of facilities, and the potential for space configuration. Visual layout simulations were created to help decision-making. Despite market challenges – high prices and a lack of transparency in contracts – a consensus was reached around the location on Rue de Luxembourg.

Managing Suppliers and Contracts

After the site was chosen, a complete review was carried out of current service providers: contracts were either terminated, renegotiated or moved (telephony, cleaning, maintenance, water, etc.). This detailed work was very complex and needed to be done quickly. At the same time, new providers were selected to meet the requirements of the new premises.

Logistics

The administrative team oversaw the entire coordination of the move: picking a moving company, sorting out the archives, selling or giving away unneeded furniture, preparing boxes, placing and following up on supply orders, installing the offices, managing access (keys, badges), and setting up IT and phone connections.

Communication and Address Updates

The address change was announced to partners, suppliers, institutions and public service providers. Communication platforms (website, email signatures, etc.) were updated, and administrative steps completed with bpost and the bank.

Identifying and Selecting the New Premises

This complicated project could not have succeeded without full involvement and a cooperative spirit from the administrative team, the director and two researchers – Jessica Martini and Korina Kominou. Despite the various obstacles, solidarity, listening and additional skills turned this challenge into a great opportunity to strengthen the organisation. The team showed strong adaptability, ensuring that the core activities continued and quickly re-establishing a functional and modern work environment.

It is important to highlight this: the individuals involved carried out considerable, often unseen work that deserves recognition and gratitude.

A Symbolic Anecdote

On the initially planned moving day, the team found itself in an unexpected situation: at the heart of the European quarter... and in the very heart of a major farmers' protest. Tractors, blockades, and road closures forced us to postpone part of the move. The relocation ultimately had to be carried out in two stages – a chaotic but memorable start that fittingly reflects the role of the Observatory – firmly established at the heart of the institutions it observes.



2. TEAM OSE

The OSE team consists of a Director, a Financial Manager, and six researchers (including the Director). They are supported by a financial, administrative and communications back office of four staff members. Additionally, the OSE benefits from the contributions of associate researchers and regular interns from across Europe. The organisation's governance is provided by the Board of Directors and the General Assembly.

2.1 Management



Dr Slavina Spasova – Director

Areas of expertise: social protection, pensions, non-standard work, self-employment, long-term care

Short bio: Slavina Spasova, with a PhD in Political Science (Université Libre de Bruxelles, ULB), has been OSE's Director since 1 December 2023. Previously, she was a Senior researcher (2021) and a researcher (2016) working in the area of social protection at the OSE. She is the OSE coordinator in the European Social Policy Network (ESPN). As such, her research agenda focuses on various social protection topics such as protection for the self-employed, pension reforms, work-life balance, health care, long-term care, sickness benefits. Slavina is also a research associate at the Centre d'étude de la vie politique (CEVIPOL), ULB and since September 2020, she is also a guest expert at the Département des Sciences sociales et des Sciences du travail (ULB). In October 2021, Slavina joined the editorial board of the Journal of European Social Security. Her previous work has explored the transformation process of the Bulgarian trade unions since 1989 and their involvement in building social institutions through the mechanisms of international socialisation and 'usages of Europe'.

Throughout 2024, the Director steered the organisation through a uniquely intense period of transformation with several major developments unfolding simultaneously, while keeping up her intense research activities. The major milestones included a strategic relocation to new premises, substantial changes to the team, and the adoption of new administrative and operational structures. While each of these elements was in itself complex, their convergence required an extraordinary level of coordination and foresight – particularly as no such broad and concurrent transition had previously been undertaken at this scale within the OSE. This process was further underscored by the transition following the departure of the organisation's long-serving financial manager, whose four-decade tenure had shaped many foundational practices. These procedural and human resource challenges, though largely unforeseen in their extent, required adaptability, resilience, and a forward-looking approach. By the end of 2024, the organisation had regained full financial, administrative, logistical, and personnel stability, with a strengthened and future-ready team in place. Slavina wishes to express her deep gratitude to the Board of Directors for their continued support, thanking in particular Mark Sapir (the former President), Marie-Hélène Ska, Philippe Pochet and Oleg Bernaz (the new President), whose insights and dedication have supported the organisation during these pivotal times.

Links: [Slavina Spasova | LinkedIn](#)

List of publications

- Ghailani D., Marlier E., Baptista I., Deruelle T., Duri I., Guio A. C., Kominou K., Perista P. and Spasova S. (2024) [Access for domestic workers to labour and social protection: An analysis of policies in 34 European countries](#), European Social Policy Analysis Network (ESPAN), Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Deruelle T. and Spasova S. (2024) 'Mutual learning workshop on access to social protection: data, indicators and monitoring systems' [Improving the Monitoring of Access to Social Protection: Good Practices and Ways Forward](#), Thematic Discussion Paper 1, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Spasova S. and Roshan S. (2024), Self-employment and social protection: state of the art and research perspectives, in Conen, W. and Reuter, E. (eds.) Handbook on Self-Employment and Public Policy, Edward Elgar.
- Schoukens P., Spasova S. (coordinator of the team), De Becker E., Haapanala H. (2024) [Improving Access to Social Protection in the European Union: a proposal for further action](#). Paper providing expertise to the future Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union (January - June 2024), OSE Research Paper, N°64, June 2024.
- Schoukens P., De Becker E., Spasova S. (2024) Analysis of a survey on 'access to social protection' for the FPS 'Social security' (unpublished).
- Natali D., Janta B., Spasova S., Bannister Curran, L., Fassino G., Copping D., McCarthy J., Kominou K., O'Brien, J., Galligani I., Webb S., Hussain N. (2024) [Study supporting the monitoring of care credits in occupational pension schemes](#). Final report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union
- Vanhercke B., Sabato S. and Spasova S. 2024 (eds.), [Social policy in the European Union: state of play 2023](#), An ambitious implementation of the Social Pillar, Brussels: ETUI and OSE, 183 p.
- Vanhercke B., Sabato S. and Spasova S., (2024) [A 'social' paradigm shift in the shadow of austerity and competitiveness reload](#) in Vanhercke B., Sabato S. and Spasova S. (eds.), Social policy in the European Union: state of play 2023, An ambitious implementation of the Social Pillar, Brussels: ETUI and OSE, pp. 133-156.

List of presentations in seminars and conferences

- 16/12: Keynote speech on Social Europe developments over the past 10 years and future perspectives, 65th Anniversary of the Revue belge de sécurité sociale, Brussels.
- 28/11: WeLaR foresight workshop.
- 27/11: 'Mutual learning workshop on access to social protection: data, indicators and monitoring systems.' Chair of a session.
- 27/11: Lecture on Social Europe developments over the past 10 years and future perspectives, Executive Committee of European Federation of Builders and Woodworkers.
- 26/11: Presentation of the report 'Mutual learning workshop on access to social protection: data, indicators and monitoring systems' [Improving the Monitoring of Access to Social Protection: Good Practices and Ways Forward](#), Brussels.
- 2-3/11: TURI network Annual Meeting, Athens, Greece.
- 26/11: Seminar, 'A Climate-proofed social protection, How to face Social-Ecological Risks?', Panel chair, SPF Sécurité sociale, Brussels.

- 03/10: OSE afterwork event on ‘Building a just green transition: Challenges and opportunities of eco-social policies’, Brussels.
- 03/10: Workshop on ‘Building a just green transition: Challenges and opportunities of eco-social policies’, chair of a panel, ETUI.
- 25-27/09: Keynote speech on Social Europe developments over the past 10 years and future perspectives, 50th Anniversary European Centre, Vienna, Austria.
- 20/09: ESPAN meeting – Presentation of the main findings, Synthesis report on Flexible retirement pathways, Brussels.
- 4-5/09: Three Lectures on EU social integration and future perspectives - Executive Summer School Social Security, KULeuven, Leuven.
- 06/06: Presentation on access to social protection for non-standard workers and the self-employed at a public hearing in the context of the EESC own-initiative opinion on ‘Imbalances in social protection’ in general and specifically for the ‘new forms of work’ and ‘atypical workers’, EESC, Brussels.
- 23/05: OSE’s first afterwork discussion ‘The role of the Belgian Presidency in promoting social investment and social protection at EU level’; chair; Brussels.
- 21/05: SPF Sécurité Sociale roundtable on the implementation of the 2019 European Recommendation on access to social protection.
- 08/05: Jury member of the PhD defence of Henri Haapanala.
- 2-3/05: University of Tübingen – Seminar on Social Europe – Minimum standards. Lecture on Social policy developments at EU level 2015- 2024.
- 19-20/03: CEPAL- Interregional seminar ‘The future of social protection facing a cascade of crises: moving towards universality with solidarity and sustainability’, Santiago de Chile, Chile.
- 18/03: Social protection during the Covid-19 pandemic CEPAL – BMZ- GIZ Internal workshop, Santiago de Chile, Chile.
- 12/03: ETUI-OSE launch of ‘Social policy in the European Union: A selective implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights’, Brussels, Belgium.
- 29/02 - 1/03: ESPAN meeting – several presentations on past and future ESPAN deliverables, Brussels.
- 16/02: Social Protection Committee of the EU : Thematic discussion on the implementation of the 2019 Council Recommendation on access to social protection Antwerp, Belgium.

2.2 The scientific team



Dr Ilda Durri – Researcher

Areas of expertise: digitalisation, labour markets, platform work, atypical work, labour law, algorithmic management

Short bio: Ilda Durri joined the European Social Observatory (OSE) in April 2024, as a researcher in EU social policies. Her work focuses on the impact of digitalisation in the world of work, and she is a frequent contributor to journals and book publications on the topic. Ilda holds a PhD in labour law from the KU Leuven University, together with two masters in law from the University of Amsterdam (LL.M.) and the University of Tirana (MSc). She has worked in a variety of contexts, including academia, non-profit organisations involved in EU law, and international organisations. At the OSE, Ilda is involved in writing reports for the European Social Policy Analysis Network (ESPAN), in topics such as access for domestic workers to labour and social protection, long-term care, etc. Her recent projects concern the impact of globalisation and digitalisation on the labour market (WeLaR), digital labour platforms in the care sector (ORIGAMI), social protection of seasonal workers (ILO report), and coordinating the work of the team on a collection of EU social policy developments for the Belgian Ministry of Social Security (Revue belge de sécurité sociale).

Links: [Ilda Durri | LinkedIn](#)

List of publications

Hendrickx F., Durri I., Stylogiannis C. (2024) [Worker participation in the enterprise](#), Book chapter in ‘The Oxford Handbook of the Law of Work’, Oxford University Press.

Ghailani D., Marlier E., Baptista I., Deruelle T., Durri I., Guio A., Kominou K., Perista P., Spasova S. (2024) [Access for domestic workers to labour and social protection: An analysis of policies in 34 countries](#), European Social Policy Analysis Network (ESPAN), Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

List of presentations in seminars and conferences

05/12: Presentation of case law on platform work, Knowledge sharing event on digital labour platforms, organized by the International Training Centre (ITC) of the International Labour Organization (ILO).



Dalila Ghailani – Senior Researcher

Areas of expertise: European law, employment, social protection, digitalisation, gender

Short bio: Dalila Ghailani is a senior researcher at the Observatoire Social Européen (OSE) in Brussels, where she has conducted applied research on social policy, labour law and European socio-economic issues for over twenty years. Previously, she worked as a social lawyer and project coordinator in the field of vocational training. A lawyer by training, with degrees in private law and European business law (ULB and IEE), she has developed in-depth expertise in social protection, active inclusion, in-work poverty and the impact of digitalisation on job quality. Her recent contributions include ESPAN network reports on access to work and social protection for domestic workers, access to social protection for young people, publications from the DIGIQU@LPUB project on the ambivalent effects of digitalisation, and analyses from the 'Working Yet Poor' project on the implementation of the European Social Rights Framework. She has also co-edited several annual editions of the reference work Social Policy in the European Union - State of Play (ETUI/OSE) and contributed to volumes on European social governance, gender equality and EU social law.

Links: [Dalila Ghailani | LinkedIn](#)

List of publications

Ghailani, D., Marlier, E., Baptista, I., Deruelle, T., Duri, I., Guio, A.-C., Kominou, K., Perista, P. and Spasova, S. (2024) [Access for domestic workers to labour and social protection: An analysis of policies in 34 European countries](#). European Social Policy Analysis Network (ESPAN), Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2024.

List of presentations in seminars and conferences

23/05: Participation in WeLaR MidTerm Conference : The Effects of Digitalisation, Globalisation, Climate Change and Demographic Shifts on Labour Markets and Welfare States in the European Union, Leuven, Belgium

24/05: Participation in the WeLaR General Assembly: Hiva Leuven.

18-19/11: Participation in the discussions on the comparative reports in Origami National Partners meeting, Barcelona.

28/11: Participation in the first workshop of the Foresight Report task of WeLaR, Brussels.



Dr Jessica Martini – Senior Researcher and Administrative Liaison between Research and Administrative teams

Areas of expertise: health care policies and systems

Short bio: Jessica Martini holds a PhD in Public Health from the *Université libre de Bruxelles* (ULB) and has a multidisciplinary background in political science, development studies and global health. She joined the OSE in March 2022 and is mainly involved in supporting the Belgian National Institute for Health and Disability Insurance (NIHDI). She notably monitors EU policy developments with a potential impact on national health care systems and presents them in a quarterly newsletter. She also conducts studies on topics related to Belgian health care priorities, such as access to health care or the setting of health targets. Since 2024, Jessica has supported the development and review of tools that facilitate collaboration between the research and administrative teams, and improve the external dissemination of OSE work. Before joining the OSE, Jessica worked as a researcher and lecturer at the ULB's School of Public Health, where she conducted policy-support research in the field of health development cooperation and led an advanced course in health system analysis. She now continues to collaborate with ULB for the supervision of master's and doctoral theses.

Links: [Jessica Martini | LinkedIn](#)

List of publications

Martini, J., & Davesne, A. (2024) [Health and health care targets. What lessons can Belgium learn from other countries?](#) OSE Paper Series, Research Paper 65. Brussels: European Social Observatory.

Martini, J. (ed.), [European Health Care News](#), issues 69-72, Brussels: European Social Observatory and Belgian National Institute for Health and Disability Insurance.

List of presentations in seminars and conferences

19/01: 'Health priorities of the European Union' (original title in French), oral presentation to the Interdisciplinary research center on social approaches to health, at the School of Public Health of ULB.

14/06: 'How can the European Union support Member States to ensure affordable access to health care for everyone?', oral presentation at the [annual symposium of the Belgian association of public health \(BAPH\)](#), in Brussels.

15/10: '10 years of work on more accessible health care for vulnerable groups. Overview of key achievements' (original title in French and Dutch), oral presentation at the [symposium entitled '10 years of the White book'](#) organised by the NIHDI, in Brussels.



Ramón Peña-Casas – Senior Researcher

Areas of expertise: employment and work, in-work poverty, job quality, atypical work and precarious employment, poverty, social inclusion, guaranteed minimum income, digitalisation, restructuring, industrial relations

Short bio: Ramón Peña-Casas holds a Master's in Social Sciences obtained in 1987 and has several years of professional experience in applied research. He joined the OSE team in 2000. His areas of expertise include the diagnosis and comparative analysis of socio-economic issues affecting various aspects of the European Union's social dimension: poverty and social exclusion, social assistance and minimum income, digitalisation of work, quality of employment and work, in-work poverty, insecure employment, working conditions, active labour market policies, activation, flexicurity, active ageing, youth policy, restructuring, and social dialogue. Ramón has coordinated many European and national projects on these subjects and is knowledgeable in the development, quality, and use of statistical indicators for political purposes. He is a permanent member of several expert groups, including the 'Belgian federal group on social indicators' and the 'Belgian Interdisciplinary Research Network on Poverty' (GIREP). He is also a member of the Scientific Committee of the 'Observatoire Girondin de la Pauvreté et Précarité' (Bordeaux – France) and of the 'Belgian Platform on social inclusion'.

Links: [Ramón Peña-Casas | LinkedIn](#)

List of presentations in seminars and conferences

- 23/05 : Participation in WeLaR Mid-Term Conference : The Effects of Digitalisation, Globalisation, Climate Change and Demographic Shifts on Labour Markets and Welfare States in the European Union, Leuven, Belgium
- 24/05: Participation in the WeLaR General Assembly: Hiva Leuven. And presentation of Work Package 7 state of the art.
- 28/11: Participation in the first workshop of the Foresight Report task of WeLaR, Brussels.



Dr Sebastiano Sabato – Senior Researcher

Areas of expertise: European integration, socio-ecological transition, EU socio-economic governance, comparative social policy

Short bio: Sebastiano Sabato holds a PhD in Political Science from the Italian Institute of Human Sciences (SUM) in Florence. Since February 2014 he has been working at the OSE as a researcher on European integration (and as a senior researcher since February 2019). Previously, he worked as a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Milan and he also collaborated with the Centre on Inequalities, Poverty, Social Exclusion and the City (OASeS) of the University of Antwerp. Between January and May 2024, he worked as an expert with the political cabinet of the Belgian federal minister of Climate, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Green Deal, in the context of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU. His current research interests include EU policies for the socio-ecological transition, EU socio-economic governance, comparative social policy, social investment and social innovation, industrial relations. In recent years, his research has focused in particular on EU policies for the socio-ecological transition. His publications on these topics include books, articles for scientific journals, book chapters, research and reflection papers commissioned by international and national institutions. Sebastiano is a member of the Scientific Committee of the Observatory on Sustainability, Equality and Social justice (OSSES).

Links: [Sebastiano Sabato | LinkedIn](#)

List of publications

- Sabato, S. and Vanhille, J. (2024), [The European Green Deal and the ‘Leave No One Behind’ principle: state of the art, gaps and ways forward](#), study commissioned by the Belgian Federal Minister for Climate, Environment, Sustainable Development and Green Deal in the framework of the 2024 Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU, OSE Paper Series, Research Paper No. 63, Brussels: European Social Observatory.
- Theodoropoulou, S., Sabato, S. and Akgüç, M. (2024), [National eco-social policies in the framework of EU just transition: the cases of Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain](#), Global Social Policy, online first December 2024.
- Vanhercke B., Sabato S. and Spasova S. 2024 (eds.), [Social policy in the European Union: state of play 2023](#), An ambitious implementation of the Social Pillar, Brussels: ETUI and OSE, 183 p.
- Vanhercke B., Sabato S. and Spasova S., (2024) [A ‘social’ paradigm shift in the shadow of austerity and competitiveness reload](#), in Vanhercke B., Sabato S. and Spasova S. (eds.), Social policy in the European Union: state of play 2023, An ambitious implementation of the Social Pillar, Brussels: ETUI and OSE, pp. 133-156.

List of presentations in seminars and conferences

- 20 – 23/02: ‘The European Green Deal and the gradual emergence of an EU framework for a just transition’, paper presented at the seminar ‘Between Legitimation and Implementation of policies for the socio-ecological transformation in Europe’, Centre for Italo-German European Dialogue, Villa Vigoni (Como – Italy).
- 05/03: ‘The European Green Deal and the ‘Leave No One Behind’ principle: state of the art, gaps and ways forward’, keynote speech at the European Conference for a Just Transition organised by the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU in Brussels.
- 12/03: ‘A just transition towards climate neutrality for the EU’, speech delivered at the ‘Expert workshop on the EU 2040 Climate Target: Governance & solidarity’, organised by the Belgian Federal Public Service ‘Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment’ / Climate Change Department, Brussels.
- 19/03: ‘Strengthening the European Disability Platform - Methodologies for collaboration and mutual learning’, speech delivered at the High-Level Conference ‘Towards full inclusion of persons with disabilities – the European Pillar of Social Rights and beyond’, organised by the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU in Brussels.
- 16/05: ‘The European Green Deal and the ‘Leave No One Behind’ principle: state of the art, gaps and ways forward’, hand-over meeting with Minister Zakia Khattabi, Federal Minister of Climate, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Green Deal (Brussels).
- 23/09: ‘The European Union and the ‘just transition’: current situation and next steps’, training (in Italian) for the Compagnia di San Paolo Foundation (in collaboration with Percorsi di secondo welfare) (online).
- 24/09: ‘The European Union and the ‘just transition’: current situation and next steps’, presentation at the ‘health in all policies and prevention working group’ of the International Association of Mutual Benefit Societies (AIM) (online).
- 29/10: Lesson on ‘The ecological transition and the welfare state: the role of the EU’ (in Italian), within the course ‘Eco-social policies, digitalisation, and new social risks’, Italian Presidency of the Council of Ministers - National School of Administration (SNA) (online).
- 01/10: ‘The European Green Deal and the welfare state’, presentation at the Bertelsmann Foundation Fellowship Class 2024 ‘Learning Innovative Approaches to Defending our Democracies’, Brussels.
- 28/11: Participation in the first workshop of the Foresight Report task of WeLaR, Brussels.
- 05/12: ‘The multifaceted influences of the EU on national social dialogue and the involvement of social partners in policy making’, presentation at the seminar ‘National Social Partners Involvement in Green Transition and Socio-Economic Recovery’, organised by HIVA – KU Leuven (Leuven).
- 10/12: Concept note of the project ‘Implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights through eco-social policies: governance options’ to the members of the European Climate Foundation’s EU Climate Governance Hub (Brussels and online).

2.3 The financial and administrative team



Paolo Ferraresi – Financial Manager

Paolo Ferraresi joined the OSE in 2024 as Financial Manager on a freelance basis. He holds a university degree in Political Science from the University La Sapienza of Rome and a master's degree in European affairs from SIOI (Italian Institute for International Relations). Since 1994, he has worked in financial management for several Brussels-based non-profit entities. In 2001, together with a pool of social entrepreneurs, he created RREUSE, a European platform of social enterprises active in re-use and recycling. In addition to financial management, he deals with the management of human resources and taxation. He is also an expert in administrative management of European projects.



Benoît Malice – Web and Logistics Assistant

Benoît Malice joined the OSE in September 1999 and is responsible for a wide range of tasks both web and logistics related. He ensures the layout of the OSE Paper Series and performs numerous duties to ensure the OSE website is regularly updated. Benoît also provides logistical support for conferences and events, such as reserving venues and securing catering services. Additionally, he manages the logistics of OSE supplies and liaises with the building manager for all things pertaining to the office.



Daniela Roberts – Communications Officer

Daniela joined the OSE in September 2024 as Communications Officer, a role which sees her lead the way on all comms-related activities. She manages the OSE's social media platforms, copyedits a wide range of publications, coordinates internal communications projects, and leads content creation efforts for the organization's forthcoming website, among other tasks. Daniela boasts extensive experience in marketing and communications, and holds a bachelor's degree in trilingual translation (English, Spanish, French). Prior to joining the OSE, she worked as community manager for Mercedes-Benz.



Renaud Smoes – Webmaster

Renaud Smoes joined the OSE in December 1997. As OSE's Webmaster, he is responsible for managing the association's IT equipment and security, the OSE website, project websites, the Microsoft 365 platform, as well as the publication and distribution of OSE's newsletters. Renaud also manages the contact database and is responsible for the IT aspects of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Other tasks of his include the organisation of events (invitations, subscription management, reception and technical support).



Rita Tomioka Padilla – Accounting and Administrative Assistant

Rita joined the OSE in June 2023 as Accounting and Administrative Assistant. Her responsibilities include receiving, classifying, and coding invoices and payments, working in close collaboration with our Financial Manager and senior accountant. She completed a private Comptacours course in accounting, attending three morning sessions between June and August. In addition to her accounting duties, Rita plays a key role in human resources management, maintaining communication with the Secrétariat social and Actiris. She also liaises with insurance companies and provides administrative support while assisting in the organization of OSE events.

2.4 Supporting bodies

The elected [Board of Directors](#) jointly oversees the activities of the OSE. It includes representatives from national and European trade unions, as well as academic institutions. In 2024, three new members joined the Board: Oleg Bernaz (FEC: Formation, Education, Culture), who was also elected as the new President; Ludovic Voet (Confederal Secretary, ETUC); and Paul Schoukens (Professor of Social Security Law, KU Leuven). 2024 marked the departure of two long-standing members of its Board of Directors. Mark Sapir stepped down as President after more than a decade of committed service. His vital role in shaping the strategic direction of the organisation, as well as his thoughtful guidance over internal matters, is warmly acknowledged in the Foreword to this report. Jozef Niemiec, former Confederal Secretary of the ETUC, also concluded his mandate, having closely accompanied the OSE's development over the years.

The [General Assembly](#), which was also partially changed due to the changes in the Board, brings together the broader group of stakeholders linked to the OSE. It includes representatives from national and European trade union organisations, trade union-related research institutes, academic institutions and the International Labour Organization.

The [Associate Researchers](#) are high-quality academics in the area of social policies and political sciences with whom OSE has collaborated on research projects, publications and organisation of events. In 2024, we were delighted to welcome Professor Amandine Crespy, Professor of Political Science and European Studies at the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB), as a new member. Her expertise in EU socio-economic governance and social policy has already enriched our collaborative work this year, and we look forward to deepening this partnership in the future.

The [Scientific Committee](#) provides independent scientific advice from renowned scholars, for example in the context of the peer review of the OSE Paper Series or the chapters of the annual 'Social policy in the European Union: state of play'.

2.5 Internships and visiting researchers

The OSE regularly welcomes interns and visiting researchers from all over Europe. During their stay, they are given the opportunity to be involved at different levels in a variety of research projects covering all employment and social fields, to network with key stakeholders including top researchers and policy-makers, and to be recognised as co-authors of OSE publications. An overview of the 2024 interns and the visiting researcher can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. 2024 interns and visiting researcher

Name of intern/visiting researcher	Internship duration	Institution of origin
Pilar Muñoz Martín	January – June	Talentium Jaén
Mees Bots	February – April	KU Leuven
Federico Airoidi	April – July	Università degli Studi di Milano
Zoe Vandenberg	April – June	Institut d'études européennes (IEE ; Université Libre de Bruxelles)
João Paulo Magalhães Visiting researcher	May – June	The University of Edinburgh
Alexandre Fromentel	June – September	Ecole Normale Supérieure de Lyon
Fracia Baeke	October – January	KU Leuven

3. NUTS AND BOLTS: RESEARCH PROJECTS CARRIED OUT IN 2024

This section provides a brief overview of the 13 projects managed by the OSE team in 2024.

3.1 European Social Policy Analysis Network (ESPAN)

Period covered: 2022-2026.

Funding: European Commission, DG EMPL.

Partners: LISER Research Institute (lead partner, based in Luxembourg) and APPLICA (Belgium).

Scope: The European Social Policy Analysis Network has replaced its predecessor, the European Social Policy Network (ESPN I and II), which since 2014 has provided the European Commission with independent information, analysis and expertise on social policy to support the development of evidence-based social policy initiatives at European level. In particular, the ESPAN supports the Commission in monitoring progress towards the EU's social protection and social inclusion objectives as set out in the Europe 2020 Strategy, the European Pillar of Social Rights and the European Semester.

Further info: [OSE project page](#) and [project website](#).

Project coordinator: Slavina Spasova.

Researchers involved in 2024: Thibaud Deruelle, Ilda Duri, Dalila Ghailani, Jessica Martini, Ramón Peña-Casas, Sebastiano Sabato, Slavina Spasova.

Activities and impact:

- In 2024, Dalila Ghailani led the Synthesis Report on 'Access for domestic workers to labour and social protection. A policy analysis in 34 countries.' This is the first report comparing the situation of domestic workers on a large scale.
- ☞ The report was successfully submitted to the European Commission in October and published on the Commission's website in early December 2024.
- In response to the identification in the 2024 Pension Adequacy Report ⁽³⁾ of a clear trend among EU Member States toward enhancing flexible retirement practices, the ESPAN experts produced 28 national reports analysing such policies. These reports examine the implementation and impact of various flexible retirement instruments – including deferred retirement with bonuses, differentiated and flexible pensionable ages, and the combination of work with pension receipt – across the EU and Norway.

3. European Commission & Social Protection Committee. (2024). *The 2024 Pension Adequacy Report: Current and future income adequacy in old age in the EU*. Publications Office of the European Union.
<https://doi.org/10.2767/909323;ParlamentÖsterreich+7ResearchGate+7Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion+7>

- ☞ The OSE team, led by Slavina Spasova, contributed to the quality assurance, revision, and drafting of the final synthesis report (to be published in 2025), ensuring analytical rigour and policy relevance.
- As is the case every year, the OSE led the quality assurance process of the Country Profiles – unpublished reports prepared by the ESPAN national experts at the request of the European Commission.
- ☞ Through its involvement in the revision process, the OSE helped guarantee consistency, strengthened the analytical foundations, and aligned the content with the requirements of DG EMPL. The reports inform the Commission’s internal analysis and support the European Semester.

3.2 Follow up of EU policy developments with an impact on health care

Period covered: 2022-2024.

Funding: Belgian National Institute for Health and Disability Insurance (NIHDI).

Scope: The project aims to provide the Belgian NIHDI with expertise on EU policies with a potential impact on national health care systems, and with analysis on specific topics related to Belgian priorities for health care.

Further info: [OSE project page](#).

Project coordinator: Jessica Martini.

Staff involved in 2024: Jessica Martini, Sebastiano Sabato, Slavina Spasova, with the support of Benoît Malice, Daniela Roberts, and Renaud Smoes.

Activities and impact:

- Regular information was collected on EU policy related to a wide range of areas, including public health, social, employment and economic policy, internal market, EU funding, competition policy, case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union and infringement procedures. The main developments were synthesized in the issues 69 to 72 of our quarterly ‘European Health Care News’.
- ☞ The issues were published in three languages (Dutch, French and English) on [the OSE](#) and [NIHDI](#) websites and sent by email to NIHDI’s General Council and Insurance Committee, which includes the key stakeholders of the Belgian national health insurance system, as well as to our subscribers, including health providers, policy-makers, academics and civil society representatives (see section 5 for quantitative details).
- On the research side, the year 2024 was mainly dedicated to assessing progress made in the implementation of the recommendations adopted in 2014 by NIHDI in the ‘White paper on access to health care in Belgium’, and to supporting the organisation of a one-day workshop on this topic.
- ☞ This work was intended to prepare the drafting of a new white paper with recommendations for improving access to health care in the next ten years. A [symposium](#) was held on 15

October in Brussels, involving about 180 stakeholders including government officers, health care providers and mutual health insurances, civil society organisations.

- ☞ The OSE presented a review of the progress made in implementing the 2014 recommendations, and helped organise round tables to gather inputs from the stakeholders on ways forward.
- A study was also finalised on the way health and health care targets are set and used in other countries and the extent to which international practice could be relevant in the Belgian context. The study was based on a literature review and on an in-depth analysis of the health target programmes developed in Austria, Germany and Sweden.
- ☞ This study fed into the process initiated by the Belgian health ministry and NIHDI with a view to setting health(care) targets and a multiannual health care budgetary trajectory. The [final report](#) was published in English on the OSE and NIHDI websites, with an executive summary in French and Dutch.

3.3 Welfare systems and labour market policies for economic and social resilience in Europe (WeLaR)

Period covered: 2022-2025.

Funding: Horizon Europe project funded by the European Commission.

Partners: The project is coordinated by the Research Institute for Work and Society (HIVA, KU Leuven) and brings together economists from universities and research institutes from six European Union countries: Austria (ZSI-WIIW), Belgium (OSE), Germany (ZEW), Italy (University of Perugia), Luxembourg (LISER), Poland (ALDGATE-IBS), as well as Serbia (University of Belgrade).

Scope: WeLaR investigates the impact of demographic changes, globalisation, digitalisation and climate change on labour markets and welfare states in Europe to a) improve the understanding of the individual and combined effects of these four megatrends on labour markets and welfare states in Europe, b) identify policy measures that foster socio-economic resilience and inclusive, sustainable growth, and c) propose ways to adapt welfare systems so that they can address the challenges posed by these megatrends and new forms of work.

Further info: [OSE project page](#) and [project website](#).

Project coordinator: Ramón Peña-Casas.

Researchers involved in 2024: Ilda Durri, Dalila Ghailani, Ramón Peña-Casas, Sebastiano Sabato, Slavina Spasova.

Activities and impact:

- In this project, Ramón Peña-Casas led a work package on 'Preferences, policies and social innovation' (WP7), with the tasks of coordinating the several work strands of WP7 and leading the task 7.1 asking OSE to elaborate a policy report formulating general policy conclusions and recommendations and proposing opportunities for capacity-building. For this purpose, an extensive literature review was carried out with the support of the researchers involved in the project.
- ☞ Ramón supported and worked with the leaders of several research work packages in preparing their policy briefs on the findings of their respective work packages. As leader of

WP7, Ramón also contributed to the reporting process and the evaluation meetings within the WeLaR project.

- The OSE also co-contributed actively to task 7.5 led by HIVA, aimed at producing a Foresight Report. OSE researchers involved in the task contributed to the preliminary work on the conceptual framework and questionnaire. OSE also contributed to the preparation and organisation of the first stakeholders meeting planned for this foresight exercise. Dalila Ghailani, Ramón Peña-Casas and Slavina Spasova participated in various meetings to prepare its content (guest list, programme, survey) and logistics, and took part in the workshop.
- ☞ The first stakeholder meeting was held in OSE premises on 28 November 2024. It brought together several stakeholders: academics, representatives of national and European institutions, social partners and civil society.
- Dalila Ghailani, Ramón Peña-Casas, Sebastiano Sabato, Slavina Spasova contributed to the preparatory meetings for a Policy Panel, to be moderated by the OSE during the Foresight workshop in Vienna in March 2025.

3.4 Academic support to the preparation of the Belgian EU Council Presidency 2024

Period covered: 2022-2024.

Funding: Belgian Federal Public Service Social Security (SPF Sécurité sociale).

Partners: CSB, University of Antwerp.

Scope: The Centre for Social Policy Herman Deleeck and the OSE secured a contract with the Belgian Federal Public Service Social Security to provide the academic underpinning of the ‘Social Affairs’ side of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU during the first half of 2024. In the first phase, the OSE was tasked with writing three background papers (during 2022 and 2023) on a) ‘improving access to social protection’; b) ‘just transition towards climate neutrality’; and c) ‘advancing disability rights in the context of the Union of equality’. These background papers have been authored by CSB and OSE researchers, as well as external academic experts. Other papers in the contract pertain to the European Pillar of Social Rights, pensions and the European Labour Authority. They were discussed in dedicated workshops during spring 2023 (see Activity Report 2023), with Belgian administrations and political ‘cabinets’, as well with a variety of Belgian and EU stakeholders. The paper and discussions will feed directly into the policymaking process.

Project coordinator: Slavina Spasova.

Researchers involved in 2024: Sebastiano Sabato and Slavina Spasova.

Activities and impact:

- In early 2024, the report providing expertise on access to social protection was officially disclosed and published on the OSE website.
- ☞ The report was presented at the EPSCO Informal Council in Namur in January 2024 by Paul Schoukens, and in February at the SPC Informal Meeting by Slavina Spasova.
- ☞ Within the framework of the project, Slavina Spasova was also invited to attend the High-Level Conference on the European Pillar of Social Rights held in La Hulpe on 15–16 April 2024,

reflecting recognition of her expertise and the report's contribution to the Presidency priorities on access to social protection. This conference culminated in the signing of the La Hulpe Declaration, which reaffirmed the EU's commitment to a strong and inclusive social Europe and set the agenda for social policy for the 2024–2029 period.

- Slavina Spasova and Sebastiano Sabato also contributed to the final assessment of the role of the Belgian Presidency in key social areas, collaborating closely with the other partners of the project.
- ☞ They authored the sections on access to social protection, the just transition, and social investment.
- ☞ This comprehensive final report, which included assessments of the Belgian Presidency's role based on interviews with key stakeholders such as the European Commission, social partners, and civil society, was submitted to the Belgian Federal Public Service Social Security in December 2024.

3.5 Social policy in the European Union: state of play 2024

Period covered: 2024-2025.

Funding: European Trade Union Institute (ETUI).

Partners: ETUI (co-publisher of the book).

Scope: Since 1999, the OSE has provided substantive input to an annual volume entitled 'Social policy in the European Union: state of play', which takes stock of European social policies and is published both in English and French. This year's project is the 25th edition, and covers the period January 2023 to June 2024. It contains six substantive chapters relating to economic governance, just transition, platform work, healthcare policy and social policy. The Conclusions summarise the key cross-cutting messages that emerge from the six chapters and make policy recommendations, while a Chronology completes the book by reporting the main EU social initiatives over the period covered.

Further info: [OSE project page](#) and [Project website](#).

Project coordinator: Sebastiano Sabato.

Researchers involved in 2024: Sebastiano Sabato, Dalila Ghailani and Slavina Spasova (editors). Ilda Durri, Jessica Martini (authors). Daniela Roberts (copyeditor).

Activities and impact:

- Throughout 2024, the editors coordinated closely with authors and external reviewers, overseeing the full revision process of the chapters, including translation (English and French) and editing. They also took charge of drafting the preface and conclusions. This extensive coordination effort was successfully completed within the year.
- ☞ Social policy in the European Union: state of play 2024 is to be published in English and French in 2025, and will enjoy a sizeable reach and widespread dissemination.

3.6 *European and International Digest (Belgian Review for Social Security)*

Period covered: 2023-2026.

Funding: Belgian Federal Public Service Social Security.

Scope: Providing an overview of the main EU and international developments that have a direct or indirect impact on social protection and social inclusion policies and debates.

Further info: [OSE project page](#) and [project website](#) (in French).

Project coordinator: Dalila Ghailani (as of 2024).

Researchers involved in 2024: Ilda Durri, Dalila Ghailani, Korina Kominou, Federico Moja, Sebastiano Sabato, Slavina Spasova.

Activities and impact:

- The OSE was awarded a second contract with the Belgian Federal Public Service Social Security in 2023 with a view to writing the ‘European and International Digest’ for the twice-yearly *Revue Belge de Sécurité Sociale* (RBSS/BTSZ).
- ☞ The Digest will continue to provide a regular overview of international and EU developments (EU, OECD, ILO, etc.) that have a direct or indirect impact on social protection and social inclusion policies and debates. It includes prominent developments on social protection, employment, health and safety, equality and non-discrimination, healthcare, and just transition policies. The RBSS/BTSZ is available online, in French and Dutch.

3.7 *Study supporting the monitoring of care credits in occupational pension schemes*

Period covered: 2022-2024.

Funding: The European Commission’s Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL).

Partners: Risk & Policy Analysts Ltd. and its partners – School of Advanced Studies Sant’Anna (Pisa) and Mercer.

Scope: The aim of the project is to help evaluate the protection of savers’ pension rights in occupational pension schemes during career breaks linked to care. Pension credits for care periods are a key policy lever to protect the pension rights of carers and support gender equality in pensions.

Project coordinator: Slavina Spasova.

Researchers involved in 2024: Korina Kominou and Slavina Spasova.

Activities and impact:

- In 2024, the final report of the project examining pension credits for care periods was completed. The study focused on key aspects such as types of care provision, access and

eligibility conditions, funding arrangements, and coverage in both statutory and supplementary occupational pension schemes.

- ☞ Slavina Spasova was responsible for the section on the national comparison of pension credits.
- ☞ The report was presented by lead author David Natali at several European events and the main findings included in the Pension Adequacy Report 2024.

3.8 ORIGAMI – Home care digital platforms and industrial relations

Period covered: 2022-2025.

Funding: DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion through the budget line ‘Improving expertise in the field of industrial relations – SOCPL-2022-IND-REL-01’.

Partners: Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (UCSC)- Transformative Actions Interdisciplinary Laboratory (TRAILab), Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) – Sociological Research Centre on Everyday Life and Work (QUIT), University of Limerick (UL)- The Kemmy Business School (KBS), the European Social Observatory (OSE), University of Groningen (RUG), CNRS – Law and Social Change (DCS), European Confederation of Industrial and Service Cooperatives (CECOP), FAOS- Employment Relations Research Centre.

Scope: This project analyses the role of digital platforms in the ongoing transformation of the home care sector, identifying the specificities of their organisational model with respect to both traditional organisations in the sector and platforms present in other sectors, the consequences for working conditions, the need for social protection and representation of interests, and the innovative strategies of social actors to respond to these needs.

Further info: [OSE project page](#) and [project website](#).

Project coordinator: Slavina Spasova.

Researchers involved in 2024: Ilda Durri, Dalila Ghailani and Slavina Spasova.

Activities and impact:

- In 2024, the OSE team was mainly involved in participating in the monthly meetings with the project partners and the steering committee meetings. Regular attendance at these meetings is important to prepare the OSE’s main project deliverables, namely an EU policy brief and the final project conference in Brussels. Additionally, Dalila Ghailani participated in all monthly project coordination meetings with Ilda Durri.
- ☞ The OSE deliverables are due in 2025 and will target a wide audience of researchers, practitioners and policymakers.
- Dalila Ghailani also represented the OSE at the national meeting in Barcelona in November 2024.

3.9 Access to social protection – project providing expertise to the Belgian presidency – analysis of questionnaires filled out by European Social Insurance Platform members

Period covered: December 2023-April 2024.

Funding: Belgian Federal Public Service Social Security (SPF Sécurité sociale).

Partners: Vrij Universiteit van Brussel (VUB).

Scope: Together with the Vrij Universiteit van Brussel (VUB; Eleni De Becker), OSE participated in a project led by KULeuven (Paul Schoukens) providing an analysis which the SPF Sécurité sociale had been asked to supply in connection with the Belgian Presidency. It was based on surveys completed by members of ESIP on the EU Recommendation of 8 November 2019 ‘Access to Social Protection’. It focused on a) the experience of national social security institutions with implementing the 2019 Recommendation in national social security and national social security law; b) possible good practices for improving effective access to social protection for standard and non-standard workers and the self-employed; and c) suggestions for the further development of the 2019 Recommendation and/or, more generally, of access to social protection for workers and the self-employed.

Project coordinator: Slavina Spasova.

Researchers involved in 2024: Slavina Spasova.

Activities and impact:

- Survey of the social security administration. The final outcome of the project was a report completed in 2024, but which remained unpublished as it contained confidential information.
- ☞ The report offered valuable insights that informed the Belgian Presidency’s approach.

3.10 Report on Just Transition – Cabinet Khattabi

Period covered: 2024.

Funding: Cabinet of the Belgian federal minister of Climate, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Green Deal.

Scope: The aim of the project was to provide scientific expertise on the European Green Deal and on the just transition in the framework of the 2024 Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, including by drafting a report on ‘The European Green Deal and the ‘Leave No One Behind’ principle’.

Further info: [OSE project page](#).

Project coordinator: Sebastiano Sabato.

Researchers involved in 2024: Sebastiano Sabato and Josefine Vanhille (external – UAntwerpen).

Activities and impact:

- In addition to documentary analysis, the research involved a broad array of stakeholders and academics, which strengthened the OSE network on socio-ecological issues. The resulting report, entitled ‘The European Green Deal and the “Leave No One Behind” principle. State of the art, gaps and ways forward’ (co-authored by Sebastiano Sabato and Josefine Vanhille), was published in May 2024, as an OSE Research Paper.
- ☞ Sebastiano Sabato presented the preliminary findings of the research at the European Conference for a Just Transition organised by the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU in Brussels (04-05 March 2024).
- ☞ A hand-over meeting with Minister Zakia Khattabi (Federal Minister of Climate, the Environment, Sustainable Development and Green Deal) was organised on 16 May 2024, and reported on both the OSE and the Minister’s social media.
- ☞ According to the Minister’s cabinet, the report was shared with the Ministers of the Environment of the other 26 Member States, and it was one of the elements resulting in the inclusion of the just transition issue in the Council Conclusions on the mid-term review of the 8th Environment Action Programme, adopted by the Environment Council on 17 June 2024.
- ☞ Overall, the project greatly contributed to increasing the visibility of the OSE in the field of the socio-ecological transition.

3.11 Just Transition 2024-2025 – European Climate Foundation (ECF)

Period covered: 2024-2025.

Funding: European Climate Foundation (ECF).

Scope: The research project is entitled ‘Implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights through eco-social policies: governance options’. The project explores how to strengthen the EU’s just transition framework by reinforcing the socio-ecological dimension of the European Pillar of Social Rights – using the review of its Action Plan to reinforce links with the EU Green Deal framework and related governance structures. In order to do so, the project will also use knowledge co-creation techniques, notably by organising three Knowledge Community workshops including stakeholders, policymakers and academics.

Project coordinator: Sebastiano Sabato.

Researchers involved in 2024: Sebastiano Sabato and Tommaso Grossi (external).

Activities and impact:

- In December 2024, the OSE delivered the Concept Note of the research project, which was discussed with the members of the ECF EU Climate Governance Hub (10 December 2024).
- ☞ The Knowledge Community workshops are expected to be held, and the final report to be published, during 2025.

3.12 ICF 'Mutual learning workshop on access to social protection: data, indicators and monitoring systems'

Period covered: September 2024-December 2024.

Funding: ICF.

Scope: This report was produced by the OSE for ICF, commissioned by the European Commission to support a Mutual Learning event. It served as the basis for discussions at the event '*Improving the Monitoring of Access to Social Protection: Good Practices and Ways Forward*', held in Brussels.

The report examines the steps taken by the European Union Member States to improve monitoring of access to social protection systems for workers and the self-employed, with a particular focus on those in non-standard work. It focuses on overarching strategies implemented by Member States to improve monitoring and data collection on access to social protection, in particular for workers in non-standard forms of employment. It also examines specific reforms aimed at strengthening statistical monitoring and improving data availability to ensure (effective) coverage of specific groups, i.e. it discusses targeted measures to ensure that workers in non-traditional forms of employment, including the self-employed, have access to (adequate) social protection.

Project coordinator: Slavina Spasova.

Researchers involved in 2024: Thibaud Deruelle, Slavina Spasova.

Activities and impact:

- ☞ The report served as a basis for discussion during the Mutual Learning event on '*Improving the Monitoring of Access to Social Protection: Good Practices and Ways Forward*', in Brussels. It was discussed and commented on by the European Commission, Member States and other relevant stakeholders.

3.13 The Social Partners as shakers and makers of Social Europe (ShaPE)

Period covered: 2024-2025.

Funding: European Commission, DG EMPL.

Partners: University of Amsterdam (UvA), Université catholique de Louvain (UCLouvain), European Social Observatory (OSE), Fondazione Giuseppe Di Vittorio (FDV), SindNova (Italy), European Movement International (EMI), European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), European Trade Union Institute (ETUI), Jean Monnet Association – Association Jean Monnet (AJM) and SGI Europe (Belgium).

Scope: ShaPE explores the historical role of the social partners in shaping Social Europe, to inform their future roles in addressing current challenges such as the green, digital, and demographic transitions, as well as EU strategic autonomy. Through innovative analysis of EU Treaty-making and law-making, ShaPE creates a meta-archive and digital exhibition to anchor future research. The project bridges perspectives across Member States, generations, and

disciplines to produce academic analysis, reports, and proposals for equipping the EU Treaties and enabling the social partners to meet new challenges.

Further info: [OSE project page](#).

Project coordinator: Slavina Spasova

Researchers involved in 2024: Dalila Ghailani, Sebastiano Sabato, Slavina Spasova.

Activities and impact:

- The OSE researchers participated in the project meeting (kick-off, discussion of deliverables). The final results are due in 2025.

4. THE PLACE TO BE: OSE EVENTS

This section describes the events that were (co-)organised by the OSE throughout 2024: these were hybrid, but mostly in-person. More details can be found on the [OSE website](#). An overview of the participation of OSE researchers in events organised by other institutions can be found in their individual sections (2.2).

12/03/2024 – Social policy in the EU: state of play 2023

OSE/ETUI conference

Keynote speakers: Vanessa De Greef, Tommaso Grossi, Namita Kambli, Esther Lynch, Torsten Müller, Ana Carla Pereira, Sebastiano Sabato, Slavina Spasova, Bart Vanhercke, Laurent Vogel.

The OSE, in collaboration with the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI), presented the 2024 edition of their flagship publication *Social Policy in the European Union*. The event took place on 12 March in Brussels, alongside two other major events: the trade union demonstration against the proposed EU economic governance reform and the exceptional ‘Jumbo’ Council of finance and social affairs ministers.

Key highlights from the event and publication included:

- The European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) has brought about a paradigm shift in EU social policymaking.
- However, the looming risk of ‘Austerity 2.0’ in the context of the reform of EU economic governance raises concerns for the future of Social Europe.
- Mobilisation of trade unions and social stakeholders will be crucial in shaping the next European Commission’s political priorities.

23/05/2024 – The role of the Belgian presidency in promoting social investment and social protection at EU level

OSE Afterwork discussion (first ever)

Keynote speakers: Katia Berti, Francesco Corti, Maaïke Vanmeirhaeghe.

Chair and discussant: Slavina Spasova.

The OSE hosted its first-ever Afterwork discussion on the role of the Belgian Presidency in advancing social investment and social protection at the EU level. The event featured insightful contributions from the keynote speakers and attracted a full-house audience whose thoughtful questions sparked a lively and meaningful debate.

Participants gained valuable insights on:

- The importance of synergies between formal and informal fora discussing social investment.
- Breaking down silos between micro- and macro-economic policies, and between social and economic policy-makers and researchers.
- The crucial role of robust EU and national statistics, including administrative data.
- Strengthening monitoring of the 2019 Recommendation with innovative topics such as transparency and digitalisation of social protection.
- The need for enhanced EU engagement in social protection, especially for vulnerable groups.

Audience questions addressed:

- The position of social investment and social protection policies in the new EU economic governance framework.
- The paradigm of economic growth amid the green transition.

03/10/2024 – Building a just green transition: challenges and opportunities of eco-social policies

OSE Afterwork discussion

Keynote speakers: Paolo Graziano, Sebastiano Sabato, Peter Schmidt, Frank Siebern-Thomas, Ludovic Voet and Thomas Wobben.

Chair: Bianca Luna Fabris.

Introduction to the event: Slavina Spasova.

The OSE hosted its second Afterwork discussion on Building a Just Green Transition: Challenges and Opportunities for Eco-Social Policies. A full house gathered to take part in a thought-provoking exchange that treated us to the following insights:

- The EU just transition framework requires increased coherence and funding, and the social/distributional implications of green transition policies should be duly considered in future EU initiatives.
- Welfare and employment policies should be better aligned to the green transition and to the consequences of climate change/environmental degradation, social protection policies included. Full implementation of the 2022 Council Recommendation on a fair transition in the Member States is crucial.
- Competitiveness and industrial policy, which appear central in the new Commission's agenda, should be firmly embedded in a strong 'eco-social' framework. Purely market-based, technology-driven policies would hamper the achievement of a just, green transition.
- Social/civil dialogue and citizen engagement are key to a just, green transition, and the EU policy framework should reflect the crucial role of cities, territories and regions in the just transition.

5. OUTPUT DATA

5.1 Publications

As illustrated in Table 2, the OSE team produced sixteen publications in 2024.

Table 2. Type and number of OSE publications in 2024

Type of publication	Number
Articles	1
Papers/reports	7
Book chapters	3
Digests and bulletins	4
Edited volumes/books	1
Total	16

5.2 OSE online

The OSE enjoys a vibrant online presence, which in 2024 included a [website](#), social media channels ([LinkedIn](#) and [X](#)) and two e-newsletters (the [Flash News](#) in English and the [European Health Care News](#) in English, French and Dutch). During the year in question, there were 3,807 downloads from the OSE website. Importantly, the total number of downloads is in fact unknown, as most OSE publications are hosted on the websites of the clients for whom the research is produced, or on the websites of academic publishers. For example, all ESPAN reports are hosted on the European Commission website, while the volumes of ‘Social policy in the European Union’ are hosted on the ETUI website.

Visits to the website and page views increased tremendously in 2024, with approximately 7,000 more visitors and 15,000 more page views than the year before. This could be thanks in part to a greater presence on social media, which has succeeded in driving traffic to the website. In this regard, and in order to provide the visitors to our website with an optimal experience, the OSE plans to fully redesign its website in 2025. This will entail extensive collaboration with a creative agency, which will be tasked with bringing our ideas to life and producing a new-and-improved home for our digital assets. More to come about this exciting project in next year’s activity report.

Finally, with regard to social media, the OSE’s following has grown steadily over the years, bolstered by timely posts shining a light on the association’s activities, publications, and events. Our LinkedIn page, in particular, has been incredibly popular and busy, with followers eager to like, comment on and share our posts.

The visual below illustrates the impact of all the aforementioned communications tools in 2024.

Social media



3,000+
followers



2,000+
followers

Website



19,777
visits



44,222
page views



3,807
downloads

E-newsletters



1,054
flash news
subscribers



946
healthcare news
subscribers