

List of Projects

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Empowering the Geopolitical EU in the Eastern Neighbourhood and the Western Balkans (GEO-POWER-EU)

European Commission, Horizon Europe

June 2024 - May 2027

GEO-POWER-EU's primary objective is to contribute to the empowerment of the EU to manage security threats within the deteriorating geopolitical environment that lies in its Eastern Neighbourhood and in the Western Balkans. The project's main goal is to articulate a proposal for a comprehensive EU strategy towards these regions that will employ new and reformed means and policy instruments, taking into consideration foresight concerning the strategic ambitions of other geopolitical actors. The project seeks to improve the EU neighbourhood policy and accession process. Conceptually, GEO-POWER-EU will link both the enlargement and EaP policies, two areas traditionally studied as two distinct political regions falling under different policy radars, in order to reflect the post-Russian invasion in Ukraine EU policy needs. Methodologically, the project will combine traditional quantitative and qualitative methods (desk research, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, case studies and a population survey in the WB and the Associated Trio), together with digital methods (Sentiment Analysis), among other things. The project will create a special 'Interdependence Database', which will become publicly available, as well as three Indices, measuring different aspects of interdependence. GEO-POWER-EU project brings together a consortium of thirteen European research organisations and universities and is being coordinated by the University of the Peloponnese. wiiw's main contribution is the development of an interdependence database aimed to measure the influence of EU's geopolitical competitors in the two regions concerned and the investigation of emigration and brain drain from these.

Global Strategy for Skills, Migration, and Development (GS4S)

European Commission, Horizon Europe

January 2024 - December 2026

In light of EU challenges relating to an aging workforce and the energy transition, the EU faces a shortage of relevant skills. The Horizon Europe project GS4S seeks to better understand global skills shortages in selected sectors (Digital, Care and Construction) and aims at strengthening evidence-based policies through new evidence on various overlooked global mobility schemes. It thereby focuses on skilled (migrant) workers' experiences with skilling, upskilling and reskilling in EU and non-EU regional contexts. By using mixed-methods research, the project looks to provide exploitable datasets and practical tools for policy makers, businesses, and educational institutions in the EU and non-EU countries towards improved matching of skills, to address labour market needs and to eventually contribute a socially sustainable (well-being oriented) global strategy for skills, migration and development. As part of an interdisciplinary consortium led by Stichting Radboud Universiteit in Nijmegen, wiiw collaborates with partners in Belgium, Estonia, Italy, Netherlands, Switzerland, Egypt, Nigeria and Bangladesh.

Fiscal policies in Europe V

Austrian Chamber of Labour

December 2024 - November 2026

This project provides an overview of other revenue and its current and potential future relevance in the EU revenue system. After setting out the conceptual foundations and important definitions related to other revenue, the project maps the different categories of other revenue and presents their development over time. Finally, it discusses several options to strengthen the role of other revenue, considering both existing and potential new other revenue sources.

Monitoring and Supporting Western Balkan Convergence with the European Union

Open Society Foundations Western Balkans (OSF)

November 2024 - December 2025

This project aims to support the economic, social, and institutional convergence of the Western Balkans with the EU by developing a comprehensive convergence database and index, alongside a dashboard and annual reports to track regional progress. Additionally, it will provide scenario analyses, policy recommendations, and advocacy strategies to further enhance the region's convergence with the EU. In that way, it can be linked to the aim of the Western Balkan leaders of establishing an Observatory of Convergence, as well as the reinvigorated enlargement momentum from the EU.

Evaluation of the 2021-2027 Interreg Rhin Supérieur / Oberrhein Programme implementation

Interreg Rhin Supérieur

October 2024 - November 2025

The 2021-2027 Interreg Rhin Supérieur / Oberrhein programme is a cross-border cooperation programme established in the framework of EU Cohesion Policy and supported by around 125 million EUR from the ERDF. It promotes territorial cooperation within the Upper Rhine area spanning across 3 European countries (France, Germany and Switzerland) and aims to make the Upper Rhine area greener, more connected, more social, smarter and closer to its citizens. The evaluation of the programme implementation reviews the programme's intervention logic, assesses the programme's implementation progress, analyses the quality of the co-financed projects and evaluates the programme's functioning, to inform and steer the programme's further implementation. In doing so, it will answer 27 evaluation questions focusing on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and EU added value of the programme.

Human Mobility in the Western Balkans: Pathways for Inclusive Growth and Human Development

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

February 2025 - August 2025

This project will provide analytical and advisory support on the impact of human mobility on economic development, competitiveness, and growth potential in the Western Balkans. It will offer a robust evidence base to inform policies in key areas: analysing human mobility trends and their economic effects; addressing emigration while supporting circular and return migration; managing immigration; and tackling skills shortages and mismatches. The project will also support the implementation of the EU's New Growth Plan and the Green and Digital Agendas, while offering programming recommendations for UNDP. Combining a rigorous analytical approach with practical policy and programmatic solutions, the initiative aims to harness human mobility to advance skills, labour markets, and human capital development, ultimately fostering inclusive and sustainable growth across the region.

What are the economic and institutional must haves for candidate countries to make an accelerated enlargement possible?

European Commission, DG Economic and Financial Affairs

October 2024 - June 2025

This project, commissioned by the EU Commission's DG EcFin, attempts to identify "the minimal economic preconditions for the accession of candidates to the European Union, presuming a scenario under which there would be strong political pressure to admit new Member States much quicker than the current enlargement approach and procedures can deliver." (quoted from the tender document). The research set out to identify such minimum conditions by focusing on the following selection criteria: (i) relevance to provide macroeconomic stability for longer-term growth (and convergence), (ii) potential spillover effects on existing member states, and (iii) implications for proper use of EU funding and mutually beneficial participation in EU programs. Given these criteria we focus in our analysis on (a) external accounts (b) the fiscal situation (c) labour markets and social indicators and (d) institutional factors.

The implications of a decarbonisation and competitiveness plan for EU member states

Friedrich Ebert Stiftung

November 2024 - April 2025

Competitiveness has emerged as a focal point of debate in the EU. The centrality of this debate is testified by the task assigned to Mario Draghi directly by the Commission President to produce a report on the future of European competitiveness. The key messages and some of the ideas from the Draghi Report are reflected in the

Competitiveness Compass and the Clean Industrial Deal. Among the other ideas, the Draghi Report proposes a joint decarbonisation-competitiveness plan to capitalise on the decarbonisation push. Given the heterogeneous production structures and capabilities of EU Member States, this plan presents distinct challenges and opportunities for each EU country. Building on these considerations, this project reflects on the proposal of a joint decarbonisation-competitiveness plan. It discusses what this plan could mean for different EU Member States and how various countries may be affected by it.

Geo-economic Interconnectivity Index (GEOII)

Bertelsmann Stiftung

July 2024 - April 2025

The Geo-economic Interconnectivity Index (GEOII) is part of the Bertelsmann Stiftung's project "Sovereign Europe: Strategic Management of Global Interdependence" and builds upon the research conducted in collaboration with the Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (wiiw) and European Center for International Political Economy (ECIPE), to measure economic interconnectivity of the EU and other powers with the EU neighbouring countries. The focus of the "Sovereign Europe" project and its continuation with the index is to explore how the EU can consolidate and expand its influence in its neighbourhood amid increasing geopolitical rivalry and blocs formation. The aim is to align relations with the EU's political interests and values, thereby strengthening its role as a global player. This index aims to capture the dynamics of geoeconomic influence and shifts in the balance of power within the region. Its core objective is to track changes in economic ties in various sectors over time and their implications for the EU's relative influence. To this end, the index will measure and evaluate the economic interconnectivity of the EU with its neighbouring countries, focusing on the bilateral flow of goods, services, and finances, as well as policies that hinder or promote this exchange. The index will compare the EU's interconnectivity with that of the US, China, and Russia in the same region, providing an evidence-based picture of the intensity and development of interconnectedness while disclosing annual differences (deltas) in the data .

Transport and Tourism in Outermost Regions: Assessing Mobility Poverty and the Effects of New Climate Policies

European Parliament

April 2024 - March 2025

This research study focuses on the nine EU outermost regions (i.e. Canary Islands, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Saint-Martin, French Guiana, Réunion, Mayotte, Azores and Madeira) and aims to assess how their transport and tourism sectors are impacted by mobility poverty, on the one hand, and the most recent EU climate policy developments, on the other. To do so, it will first elaborate a functional definition of mobility poverty supported by a set of indicators as well as delve into the latest EU climate legislation, in particular the transport-related 'Fit for 55' legislation. Then, it will analyse the effects of mobility poverty and the new EU climate legislation on the regions' transport and tourism sectors, taking the lens of transportation flows within, to and from the outermost regions. EU, national and regional-level measures taken to tackle these potentially adverse effects will also be investigated. The findings of this analysis should feed into policy recommendations for national and EU policy-makers.

The spatial impact of EU policies

European Commission, DG Regional Policy

October 2023 - January 2025

The objective of this study is to assess the impact of the EU initiatives and policies, such as the Common Agricultural Policy, the Common Fisheries Policy, the European Research and Innovation policy (Horizon 2020), the EU Emissions Trading System etc., on economic and social cohesion in the EU. The results of the study will contribute to the current discussion on the reform of EU Cohesion policy by providing insights into: • potential cohesion trade-offs, synergies and complementarities between EU Cohesion policy and other EU policies and initiatives • how to further develop the "do no harm to cohesion" principle and • how Territorial Impact Assessments can be further developed to improve policy coordination. These aspects will be explored not only through the lens of territories, but also that of social groups, thereby investigating whether the reduction of inter-regional disparities goes hand-in-hand with the reduction of intra-regional inequalities. The consortium under leadership of wiiw will also analyse funds disbursed under regional State aid, with a particular attention to the amounts of aid channelled to EU regions under this regime to enhance regional development.

Tobacco taxation in Eastern Europe

Bloomberg Philanthropies

October 2023 - December 2024

The aim of this project, funded by the Bloomberg Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use, is to establish a regional service and research hub to conduct analysis of tobacco taxation and related issues in Central East and Southeastern Europe (CESEE). wiiw looks to identify and build the capacity of policy think tanks in selected countries, in order to create local evidence and support country-level tax reforms. The focus lies on (lower-) middle-income countries (MICs) in the region.

Export diversification strategy for Venezuela

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

October 2023 - December 2024

This project aimed to design a sustainable diversification strategy for Venezuela and industrial policies to support the identified products and processes. In the framework of this project, wiiw analysed the export structure of Venezuela using the product space methodology and identified new export opportunities through a thorough analysis that involved the product space metrics and additional indicators on linkages, employment, export markets, and foreign exchange.

Ex post evaluation of Cohesion Policy Programmes 2014-2020: Crisis response

European Commission, DG Regional Policy

November 2023 - December 2024

This evaluation study aims to review the adjustments brought to the EU Cohesion Policy regulatory framework in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic crisis and the war in Ukraine: CRII, CRII+, REACT-EU, CARE, CARE+, FAST-CARE and SAFE. More specifically, it will assess whether (and the extent to which) the objectives of these crisis responses have been achieved, and how Member States and regions took up the instruments and flexibility mechanisms they introduced. It will thus evaluate the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and EU added value of the crisis responses and provide lessons learned for strengthening resilience in view of future crises. To do so, this study relies on a large range of quantitative and qualitative research methods: data analysis, literature review, survey, interviews, case studies, etc. This study is coordinated by Spatial Foresight.

Analysis of the Fiscal and Health Impact of Increasing Tobacco Excise Taxes

The World Bank

February 2024 - December 2024

The aim of this rapid-response research note, funded by the World Bank, was to estimate the fiscal and health benefits from raising tobacco taxes in Ukraine, which is contemplating tobacco tax reform at this challenging time for the country's public finances. Our findings reveal that, depending on the chosen scale and speed of the increase, as well as variation by tobacco product, tobacco tax reform would boost total tobacco tax revenue in Ukraine by between 39.3% and 68.9%, while preventing between 65,000 and 165,000 smoking-related deaths.

Fiscal policies in Europe IV

Austrian Chamber of Labour

January 2023 - November 2024

In this project, we assessed fiscal policies and their macroeconomic effects in the European Union and paid particular attention to Austrian fiscal policy in the European context. Our research was primarily based on using quantitative data and methods, which allowed us to take a comparative, European-wide perspective. In three sub-projects, we analysed the cyclical sensitivity of government spending in Austria (sub-project 1), the reform options for fiscal rules in the context of European debates (sub-project 2) and full employment issues linked to fiscal policy in Austria and the EU (sub-project 3).

Economic Strategies for a thriving Danube Region - Policy Note

Austrian Economic Chamber

April 2024 - November 2024

This policy note explores key issues in the Danube Region, focusing on labour market dynamics, including the development of digital skills, foreign direct investment (FDI) with a particular emphasis on FDI in the IT sector, and the robotisation and automation of the region's industries. Covering 14 countries—Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Germany, Hungary, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, and

Ukraine—it outlines policy recommendations aimed at enhancing workforce readiness, attracting high-tech foreign investments, and ensuring the region's competitiveness in an increasingly digitalised and automated global economy.

Fiscal rules and fiscal councils in the Western Balkans

The World Bank

August 2023 - October 2024

In this project, wiiw acted as a consultant in the framework of a larger World Bank programme aimed at assisting the Western Balkan countries (WB6) in enhancing their fiscal responsibility frameworks. The institute hereby: - developed a comprehensive dataset on fiscal rules, councils and medium-term budgetary frameworks; - created a scorecard of the rules, councils and frameworks along the lines of the European Commission; - assessed the effects thereof on fiscal, economic and social outcomes; - supported the World Bank in launching and running a network on fiscal rules and fiscal councils for the WB6.

Preparation of Ukraine for its accession to the EU in the area of Cohesion Policy

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

June 2024 - October 2024

This initiative is based on a cooperation between the Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (wiiw) and the U-LEAD with Europe programme implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). It specifically aims to contribute to the preparation of Ukraine in view of its accession to the EU in the area of Cohesion Policy (Chapter 22 of the accession negotiations) and focuses on four key dimensions of Cohesion Policy: governance framework, administrative capacity, programming, as well as monitoring, reporting and evaluation processes. This work draws from the experience of two EU Member States (i.e. France and Lithuania) and one candidate country (i.e. North Macedonia). It will result in guidelines tailored to the needs and goals of Ukraine as regards its reconstruction and future EU membership, also considering its decentralisation reform and regional development policy. U-LEAD with Europe: Local Empowerment, Accountability and Development Programme is a multi-donor action of the EU and its member states Germany, Poland, Denmark and Slovenia to support Ukraine on its path to strengthening local self-government. U-LEAD promotes transparent, accountable and responsive multi-level governance in Ukraine and empowers municipalities.

Nearshoring and decarbonisation in the Western Balkans

DIHK - Deutscher Industrie- und Handelskammertag

January 2024 - September 2024

This project followed up on wiiw's previous study "Getting stronger After COVID-19: Neashoring Potential in the Western Balkans" and aimed at assessing whether there has indeed been some near-shoring to the Western Balkans during the past 2.5 years and in which countries and industries it has occurred. In addition, the project explored what companies from the Western Balkans think about decarbonisation, what the challenges are that they are facing with respect to it, and how nearshoring trends can be synergised with ongoing efforts in decarbonisation and green transformation. The main research questions were addressed by analysing quantitative and qualitative data on FDI in the WB6, by conducting and analysing surveys of WB6 companies and finally by conducting and analysing surveys of German companies, in order to assess their perceptions and views on the importance of decarbonisation for their investment and cooperation with other companies. We concluded that near-shoring is indeed taking place in the region, aligns well with the global trend of decarbonisation, and presents an opportunity for both local companies and the broader economies of the Western Balkans.

Green Transition

Kontext Institut

April 2024 - May 2024

Green technologies hold great potential for the European economy. Faced with the active use of green industrial policies in China and the US, Europe cannot sit back and observe the unfolding of this 'green race'. A deeper EU involvement in the production of green technologies could create new business opportunities and ignite a new wave of innovations and investment. Similarly, in the face of escalating environmental degradation and the imperative of mitigating climate change, nations grapple with the intricate interplay between economic growth and environmental sustainability. In such context, understanding the vulnerabilities and resilience of industries emerges as a pivotal consideration. This project analysed the impact on GDP and employment of reshoring to the EU the production of five major green technologies (photovoltaics, wind turbines, batteries, electric motors and electric vehicles) and the

resilience of low carbon intensity (LCI) versus high carbon intensity (HCI) industries of the Austrian economy, examining the impact of energy price shocks on real gross value added (GVA) and employment within both LCI and HCI industries.

Toward innovation-driven growth: innovation systems and policies in EU member states of Central Eastern Europe

Friedrich Ebert Stiftung

September 2023 - March 2024

In this study, we pursued five main objectives: (1) Communicate in an understandable manner what type of innovation systems and policies promote the cultivation of domestic innovative capabilities, and enhance the technological competitiveness of economies. We made reference to best practice examples from around the world, drawing on the literature on policy initiatives implemented by successful innovators. (2) Critically assess the strengths and weaknesses of the current innovation climate of EU-CEE countries, taking into account the implications arising from the current megatrends. (3) Critically assess the strengths and weaknesses of the innovation policy landscape of EU-CEE countries, highlighting such policy initiatives which can provide a basis for mutual learning. The scope of the EU-CEE policy landscape covers national initiatives on the one hand, and framework conditions and opportunities arising from EU industrial and technology policy initiatives on the other hand. (4) Propose a set of concrete policy recommendations that would promote innovation-driven growth in EU-CEE countries. (5) Keeping in mind the shared challenges and opportunities of the EU-CEE region overall, tailor the findings to each country's specific development needs and capabilities.

A stronger CEE for a stronger Europe - Policy Note

Erste Group Bank AG

December 2023 - February 2024

The performance of CEE economies over the last three decades has been a success story, with more ups than downs. However, in the aftermath of the pandemic, amidst rising geopolitical challenges and faced with a continuing demographic decline, countries in the region need to question whether a growth model still largely based on imported technology, cheap labour and fossil fuel imports can continue to be the main driver of convergence. In this context, the European Union needs to strengthen its focus on competitiveness, growth and social inclusion in the CEE member states. And beyond. The purpose of this project – a collaboration between wiiw and Thomas Wieser – was to look at which specific policies need to be addressed, in order to have a stronger CEE for a stronger Europe.

China's influence over European Strategic Transport Infrastructure

European Parliament

May 2023 - December 2023

This project focused on the analysis of China's direct investments in the European strategic transport infrastructure and aims at evaluating potential impacts on the security of EU Member States and the EU Neighbourhood, whilst also looking to draw evidence-based and actionable policy conclusions to mitigate potential risks. By providing in-depth case studies of several EU members and countries of the EU Neighbourhood, the project looked to identify the concentration of Chinese direct investments in transport infrastructure at the external borders of the EU and the impact on the EU's security as well as on its connectivity. Additionally, the project also drew on the policy responses implemented in the United States and evaluated their strengths and weaknesses for the EU context. wiiw coordinated this project in close collaboration with the Mercator Institute for China Studies (MERICS).

Cohesion Policy in the Outermost Regions

European Parliament

June 2023 - December 2023

This research study aimed to analyse the socio-economic development and convergence process of the EU outermost regions (i.e. the Canary Islands, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Saint-Martin, French Guiana, Réunion, Mayotte, the Azores and Madeira). Building on an overview of the geographic, governance, economic, social and climate characteristics of these remote territories, it investigated how EU Cohesion Policy is implemented at the regional level, and the role of place-based, tailor-made approaches to foster sustainable and inclusive growth. Furthermore, three case studies allowed for more detailed insights into territorial, social and economic cohesion issues in these regions and their situation in the context of a smarter, greener, more connected and more social Europe. The findings of this analysis fed into policy recommendations on the design and purpose of EU policies (in particular, EU Cohesion Policy) to better support the EU outermost regions.

Long-term impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on labour market integration of refugees (FIMAS reCOV)

International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)

March 2023 - December 2023

FIMAS reCOV was the sixth wave of the Austrian longitudinal study on integration processes of refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran in Austria. Its core focus lay in labour market integration, but also in the interactions with other integration domains such as social and cultural integration, educational integration, residential integration, integration into the health and other areas of the welfare system, which favour or hinder labour market integration. The project FIMAS reCOV followed up our longitudinal analysis by focusing on the impact of the Covid-crisis with its different phases (lockdowns, recoveries) on integration processes and labour market experiences of the different sub-groups of refugees (differentiated by age, gender, educational attainment, country of origin) and identified the particular challenges they face. The overall sample included over 2,700 respondents of which about a third had also participated in at least one of the previous five FIMAS waves. FIMAS reCOV built on and continued the previous five surveys FIMAS, FIMAS+INTEGRATION, FIMAS+INTEGRATION², FIMAS+YOUTH and FIMAS+Frauen.