

# 2024 Annual report

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Activity report



The purpose of this report  
is to demonstrate the key  
reflections and highlights of  
Friends of Europe's activities  
in 2024.

# Peace, Security and Defence (PSD) programme

## Ukraine Initiative

The **Ukraine Initiative** launched in **February 2024** aims to complement existing official efforts directed at enhancing short-, medium- and long-term support for Ukraine, as well as engage European and transatlantic civil society, business and public opinion by activating an expansive, heterogeneous and impactful platform for advocating the strategic importance of supporting Ukraine and its Euro-Atlantic ambitions. This year we have already held four events:

- **Heartfelt Narratives** launched the Initiative on February 14 (attended by 116 participants online);
- **Ukraine Security Forum** (269 guests attended throughout the day);
- **Post-NATO Summit Instant Briefing** (73 online participants);
- **Discussion on the EU priorities for Ukraine's support** (30 guests).

At the **Ukraine Security Forum**, flagship event, we welcomed several prominent speakers, such as **Kadri Simson**, European Commissioner for Energy; **Olha Stefanishyna**, Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration of Ukraine; **Hanno Pevkur**, Minister of Defence of Estonia; **Kajsa Ollongren**, Minister of Defence of the Netherlands; **Gert Jan Koopman**, Director-General of the Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations; **Oleksandra Matviichuk**, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Head of Centre for Civil Liberties; **Andrii Pyshnyy**, Governor of the National Bank of Ukraine; **Oleksandr Scherba**, Ambassador-at-Large, Ukraine.

Publication of the study **“Ukraine: cost of inaction – What's at stake for our economies, politics and democracies”** was tied to the **Ukraine Security Forum**: the paper details the geopolitical stakes involved, including the potential for expanded conflict, increased Russian influence, and the weakening of international norms, as well as the economic risks if we fail to give Ukraine the support it needs. The report can be downloaded [here](#).

Publication of two op-eds **“Europe at a crossroads: seizing Russian assets to secure Ukraine's future”** ([link](#)) by Prof. Lee Buchheit and **“Frozen Russian assets and flying pigs”** ([link](#)) by Prof. Lee Buchheit and Prof. Mitu Gulati. The papers served as the basis for the launch of the working group of experts on **frozen assets** that investigated complexities surrounding the utilization of Russian frozen assets and explored potential avenues for deploying potentially \$320bn of assets via a World Bank trust to serve Ukraine as it seeks to restore its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Launch of the **Strategic Communications Group**, establishing a multi-stakeholder platform to exchange best practices and facilitate new private-public info-sharing and partnerships in relation to messaging, dissemination of up-to-date information and scaling up successful initiatives to counter disinformation and reach wider public and political support for Ukraine.

Preparation of the WPS project **“Frontline Voices: Women Shaping Peace and Security in Ukraine”**. Within this project it is foreseen to conduct three hybrid Working Groups, composing of Ukrainian, North American and European female leaders in the field; recording of three podcasts; publication of a policy paper including outcomes of the discussions and its presentation at the public debate.

# Balkan Journey & Shared Justice

The **EU-Western Balkans Summit**, hosted in the framework of the Balkan Journey and the Shared Justice Initiative on 5 December 2024 in Brussels, focused on redefining EU enlargement and accelerating the accession processes of Western Balkan countries while also linking it to the European integration of Ukraine and Moldova. The summit explored key areas such as political reform, economic development, and justice reform, underscoring the EU's commitment to integrating the Western Balkans and advancing its strategic vision for a united and cohesive Europe.

The **Shared Justice initiative** launched in 2023 within the framework of the Prespa Forum Dialogue, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia, continues to focus on fostering dialogue on justice reform in the Western Balkans. This effort aims to shed light on effective instruments, successful models, and critical reforms required for robust justice mechanisms. As part of this initiative, the "**Roundtable for the Fight Against Corruption and Strengthening Justice Mechanisms**" was held in Tirana on 25 November 2024 in cooperation with the Albanian Helsinki Committee. The roundtable addressed judicial transparency, anti-corruption efforts, and procedural harmonization, with prominent contributions from **Clarisse Pasztor**, Deputy Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania; **Asli Cetinel**, Deputy Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Albania; **Altin Dumani**, Head of the Special Prosecution Against Corruption and Organized Crime (SPA), among others. The discussions emphasized cooperation between domestic and international actors in tackling systemic challenges.

High-level participants included **Marta Kos**, European Commissioner for Enlargement; **Gert Jan Koopman**, European Commission Director-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations; **Jakov Milatović**, President of Montenegro; **Ana Brnabić**, President of the National Assembly of Serbia, Prime Minister of Serbia (2017-2024); **Arben Fetai**, Deputy Prime Minister for Good Governance and Transparency of North Macedonia; **Olha Stefanishyna**, Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration and Minister of Justice of Ukraine; **Cristina Gherasimov**, Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration of Moldova; **Bojan Božović**, Minister of Justice of Montenegro; **Urmas Paet**, Member of the European Parliament, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia (2005 to 2014); **Helmut Brandstätter**, Member of the European Parliament, Member of the Delegation to the EU-Albania Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee, Member of the Delegation for relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, including the EU-Bosnia and Herzegovina Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee and the EU-Kosovo Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee; **Karlo Ressler**, Member of the European Parliament, Chair of the Delegation to the EU-North Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee; **Milica Delevic**, Director of Governance and Political Affairs, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD); **Tatjana Shterjova Dushkovska**, Secretary General, Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum; **Alexander van Dam**, National Member for The Netherlands; Contact point, within the Board on Relations with Partners, for Western Balkans Criminal Justice project, European Union's Judicial Cooperation Unit (EUROJUST); **Kyriakos Hadjyianni**, Special Representative on South East Europe and Vice-President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE PA) among many others.



# Global Europe programme

RECALIBRATING AND  
REINFORCING GLOBAL  
COOPERATION

Launched the DRIVE Impact  
Initiative, with the first round of  
working groups held in June,  
and second round happening in  
October

Continued covering current  
trends in EU-China relations:  
the upcoming Europe-China  
Forum which will focus on the  
50th anniversary of EU-China  
diplomatic relations, exploring  
the current geoeconomic  
tensions

Organised the EU-ASEAN Forum,  
with opening remarks from the  
ASEAN's Secretary General, and  
with two sessions on economic  
relations

Organised together with the Africa  
Europe Foundation (AEF) a  
working dinner focused on  
rethinking the current  
development finance structure  
and governance

We hosted with AEF the Future  
Africa-Europe Summit, where the  
preliminary findings of the DRIVE  
Impact Initiative were discussed

# European Young Leaders programme

- In 2024, we successfully launched a new class of 44 European Young Leaders.
- The yearly seminar took place in Paris and provided an opportunity to engage the new class and alumni, establish a partnership with Poland through their embassy ahead of their EU presidency, support the development of an entrepreneurship programme by a leading global brand at their request, and involve citizens in a discussion with representatives from all mainstream parties, from different countries, ahead of the elections.
- The EYL40 also offered a structured and targeted support to the Ukraine initiative in the form a series of critical thinking articles, speaking engagements in Ukraine events as well as participating and organising Friends of Europe trip to Kiev.
- The EYL40 played a key role in bringing a European perspective to the 24,000 citizens who attended a city festival in Piacenza over three days, which also featured the participation of the President of the Italian Republic.

## 2024 EYL40 Class include:

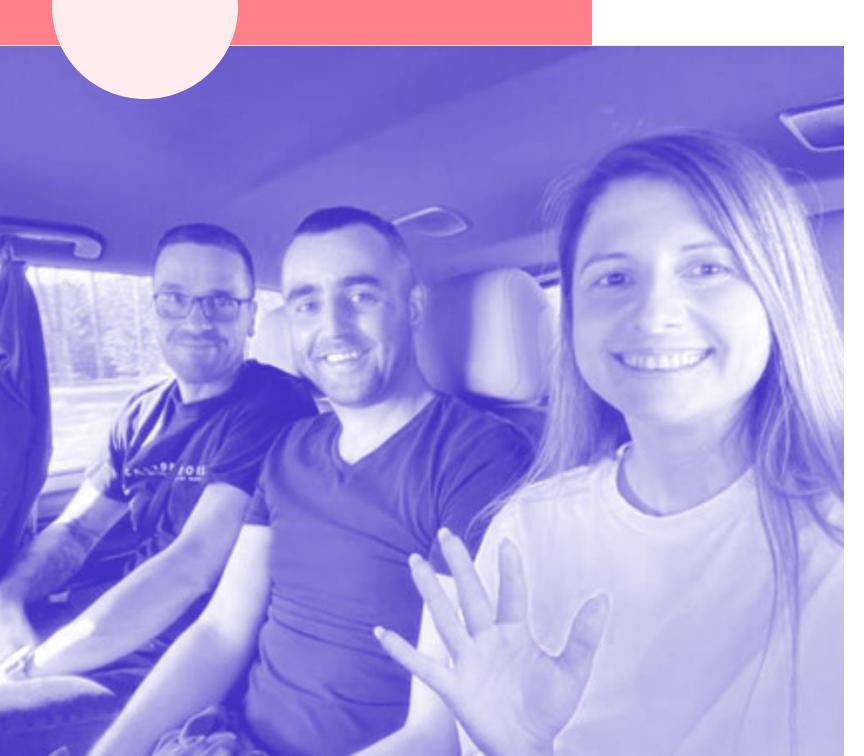
- **Valeriya Ionan**, Ukraine Deputy Minister of Digital Transformation
- **Luka Mesec**, Slovenian Deputy Prime Minister who established the Ministry of Solidarity-Based Future
- **Heidi Sevestre**, French glaciologist, explorer and “glacier doctor”
- **Anna Ascani**, Vice-President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies
- **Zarah Bruhn**, German Commissioner for social innovation and founder of SocialBee, a non-profit supporting companies in hiring refugees and migrants
- **Alina Șerban**, award-winning Romanian Roma actress, playwright and director
- **Tobias Stüber**, CEO of Flibco
- **Rodrigo García González**, co-founder of Notpla, a start-up striving to make packaging disappear with seaweed-based products and an Earthshot prize winner
- **Ryyan Alshebl**, Syrian refugee turned Mayor of the German town of Ostelsheim

# EYL exchange visit to Kyiv, Ukraine

16-20 SEPTEMBER 2024

## SUMMARY

- **AIMS:** (1) To express solidarity with the Ukrainian people by visiting country at war and; (2) To identify future actions that the EYLs as individuals and the EYL programme could take to support Ukraine, address/resolve concrete issues/problems.
- **PARTICIPANTS:** Mary Fitzgerald, EYL 2013, Non-resident scholar at the Middle East Institute, Senior Fellow for Peace, Security & Defence, and Trustee, Ireland; Jasminko Halilović, EYL 2023, Founder & CEO, War Childhood Museum, Bosnia & Herzegovina; Klen Jäärats, EYL 2015-2016, Executive Director of the Estonian Centre for International Development (ESTDEV); Ivan Lesay, EYL 2020-2021, Board Member & Head of Strategy and M&A, ESCO Slovensko, Slovakia; Péter Pető, Editor-in-Chief of 24.hu (the biggest Hungarian online daily), Hungary; Tamara Srzentić, EYL, former Minister for public administration, digital society and media, Montenegro.



## MEETINGS WITH...

**Anton Demokhin**, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine for Digital Development, Digital Transformations and Digitalization

**Oleksii Sobolev**, First Deputy Minister of Economy of Ukraine

**Kateryna Pavlichenko**, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine

**Ukrainian Startup Fund + Brave 1 team** (government tech cluster) led by Nataliia Kushnerska

**Oksana Lebedeva**, a founder of Gen Ukrainian (a public organisation that specialises in the mental rehabilitation of children who have faced the horrors of war)

**Roman Grishchuk & Maryna Bardina**, Members of the Ukrainian Parliament

The visit was organised at the suggestion and with the support of **Valeriya Ionan**, Deputy Minister for Euro integration at the Ukrainian Ministry of Digital Transformation

# EYL exchange visit to Kyiv, Ukraine

## MEETINGS WITH...

Anna Gvozdiar, Deputy Minister for Strategic Industries of Ukraine

Serhiy Derkach, Deputy Minister for Communities and Territories Development of Ukraine

Valentyn Paniuta, head of the United24Media (government PR agency)

Olga Rudenko, EYL 2024, Editor-in-chief at the Kyiv Independent, Representatives of Entrepreneurship and Export Promotion Office (EEPO) & Diiabusiness team

Daria Kaleniuk, newly nominated EYL of 2025, Co- Founder & Executive Director at the Anticorruption Action Centre of Ukraine

## A FEW OUTCOMES SO FAR

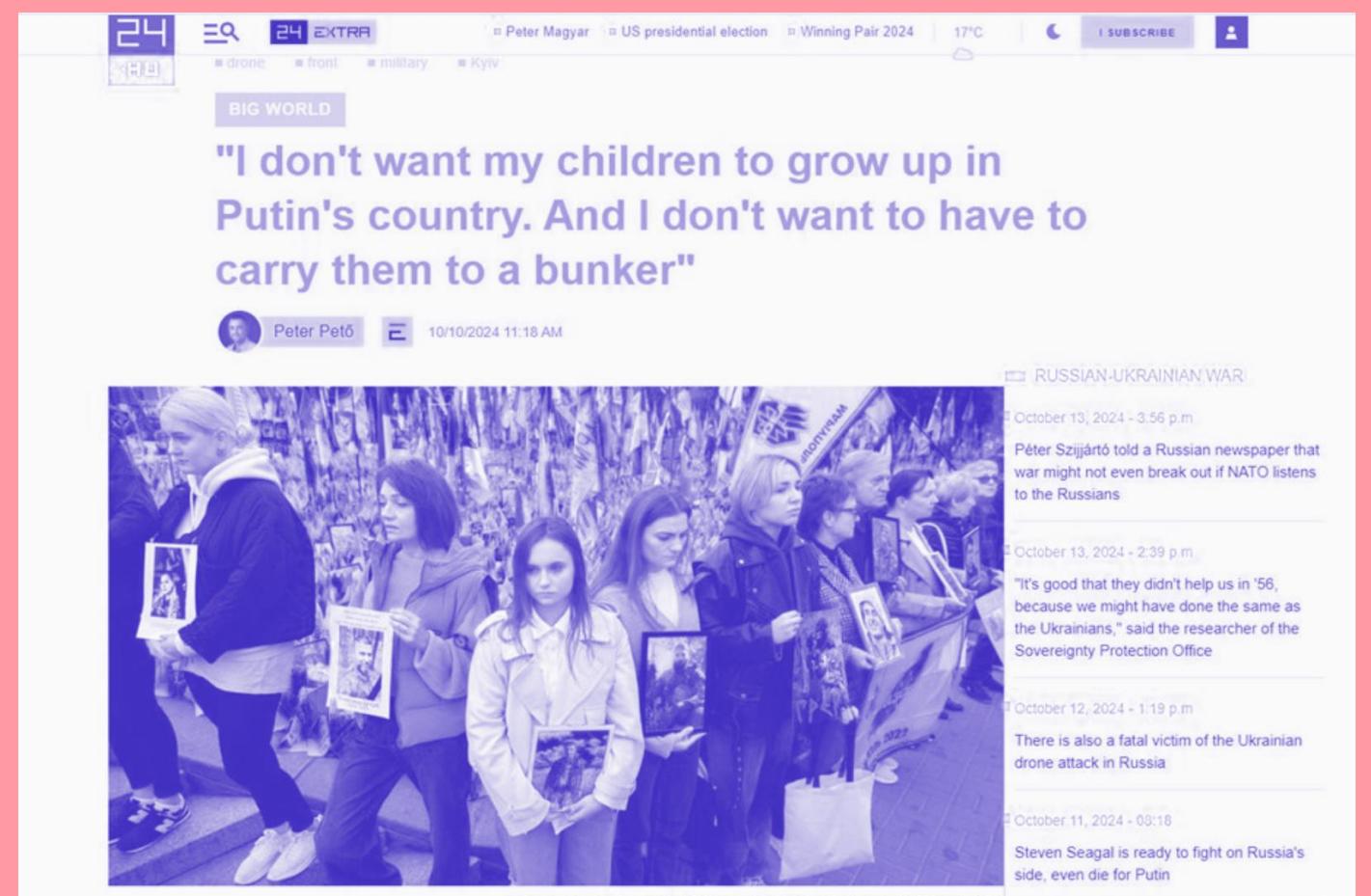
→ A series of articles in Hungary in 24.hu on the Kyiv trip (*NB Ukraine seldom makes it to the most read pages in Hungarian news*) by Péter Pető

→ A talk at the Kilkenomics Festival in Ireland by Mary Fitzgerald



During the trip, Tamara Srzentić gave an open lecture to Ukrainian students at the CDTO Campus on “Building a Human-Centered State”

Other EYLs had bilaterals with many other Ukrainian and international stakeholders, e.g., a newly- appointed EIB representative in Kyiv, Kristina Mikulová, among others.



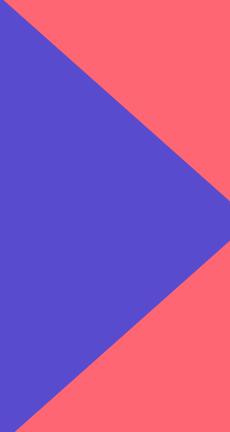
# Climate, Energy and Sustainability (CLEN) programme

- Recognising the importance of public – private sector engagement, we have maintained long-standing partnerships as well as forging new opportunities.
- This year again Enel and EDF Group partnered with us. Both have been supporting us for over a decade.
- We have strengthened our collaboration with the European Environment Agency (EEA) this year, organising three activities around their flagship reports, welcoming them at the State of Europe, as such establishing a quarterly partnership up until early 2025. The EIB has again partnered with us for our climate and energy related activities.
- In spring, we published the “**Strengthening the EU’s Sustainable Finance Agenda**” report, highlighting the critical role of finance in advancing a climate-resilient, net-zero future. This policy briefing has been supported by discussions with key stakeholders from EU institutions, the private sector, academia, and civil society and was a project financially supported by the Laudes foundation.
- We have continued working as consortium members in the SSH Centre project, an innovation-focused project funded by Horizon Europe that develops transdisciplinary knowledge for climate-energy-mobility transitions.
- Our yearly summit on climate and energy has brought together senior representatives from all backgrounds and addressed the critical position that the energy sector occupies for the future of Europe's competitiveness and the transition to climate neutrality. The analysis of these policy issues has been strengthened thanks to the continued collaboration with the International Energy Agency (IEA).



# Sustainable livelihoods

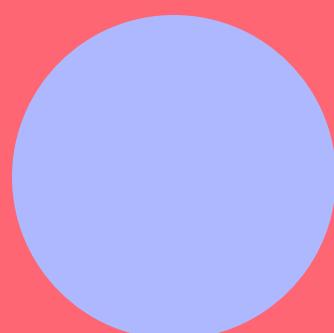
- The role of health policy in the EU has changed profoundly in the last few years. The COVID-19 pandemic helped to underscore the reality that infectious diseases and health emergencies must be tackled through a cross-cutting approach and cannot be decoupled from environmental, climate, economic and social considerations.
- Through our work, we focused on continuing to integrate the lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic into health systems and supporting the EU in supporting member states to deliver public health in an effective way.
- 2024 activities focused on the imperative of establishing an enabling ecosystem for innovation in Europe, ensuring that both patients and industries reap the benefits of increased rewards to healthcare innovation. Our work focused also on the need to progress on the integration of health policy into its environmental and climate objectives.
- Our activities, including this year's summit held shortly after the European elections, brought together public and private sector representatives, civil society, academics and patients in thought-provoking debates on all the above and the role of health in its next mandate.



One north star for  
our organisation



→ the Renewed  
Social Contract



# Renewed Social Contract

→ The Renewed Social Contract continues to frame Friends of Europe's engagement with the European Political landscape and will be the red thread of the upcoming State of Europe high-level roundtable. SoE 2024 will focus on Europe's choices for the next institutional cycle and bring together 200+ dignitaries from the private, public, and civil society sectors.

→ The '10 Policy Choices for a Renewed Social Contract for Europe' and the Debating Europe 2024 Voices reports were launched at the European Parliament Plenary session in Strasbourg in February 2024, with a cross-political party support from the S&D, Greens/EFA, Renew Europe, and EPP.

→ The 10 Policy Choices report was widely disseminated in 2024 and was accompanied by a strong outreach to key decisionmakers at key moments in 2024, such as:

- Ahead of the European Parliament elections;
- the publication of the EU Strategic Agenda by the European Council; and
- July release of the Commission President's Political Guidelines.

→ The activation campaign of the 10 Policy Choices has consisted of:

- An *In Conversation With* events series with candidates to the Presidency of the European Commission such as Sandro Gozi and Nicolas Schmit in the lead up to the European elections;
- The organisation of a session at the *European Forum Alpbach* on policy choice n°7: Engaging the private sector for social good.
- The inclusion of the policy choices in all relevant events and engagements by Friends of Europe to disseminate the content of the report and test the solidity of the choices laid out therein.
- The set up of working groups, composed of experts on the various policy areas identified in the '10 policy choices' report, established for the duration of the 2024-2029 European mandate to test the validity of the policies outlined in the document and support their implementations were applicable.

# Engaging citizens with Debating Europe

## CEMENTING OUR CITIZEN-GENERATED DATA

- Launched our **2024 Voices** multiannual and multilingual focus group project involving 2024 people in 7 countries - Belgium, Poland, Germany, Italy, France, Spain and Sweden.
- The proprietary citizen-generated data is underpinning FoE's 2024 activities around the RSC, and partner events.
- Throughout 2024, the data is also fuelling 12 citizen panels directly linked to the 7 countries of the study, several in their local language, involving focus group participants, EYLs and policymakers.
- Embarking on the next phase of the project called **Voices for Choices** engaging 2000 citizens aged 18-35 from Germany, Italy, Poland, France and Denmark in surveys mirroring FoE activities. Results will be published in Q1-2 2025.



# Engaging citizens with Debating Europe

## CLARITY OF PURPOSE

- Aligned our business development proposals with FoE to maximise impact, revenue, and efficiencies.
- Ensured all FoE activities - SoE, EYL seminars, summits - are underpinned by citizen generated data and citizen participation.
- Upgraded our research methodology to an academic standard by engaging the expertise of the Head of the Politics Department at the University of Surrey.
- Launched the democracy area of expertise to explore challenges to democracies, under the banner of our RSC work.
- 2024 activities comprised a 6-part podcast series **Policy Voices: AI & Democracy** exploring the most pressing issues at the intersection between AI and democracy made ever more relevant in the biggest election year in human history.



# Digital & Data governance



In 2024, the Digital & Data governance programme focused on **Artificial Intelligence** in the context of elections and democracy, as well as the future of work as well as the importance of transatlantic relations in this regard, with the first AI & Society Forum taking place in September.

Digital leadership as a key component of the EU's competitiveness is the second stream of this year's work with a **flagship summit** on 10 December "**Europe's digital future: leading the next industrial revolution**", a new partnership with TCS on a new annual European Policy Summit, exploring how Europe can lead the next industrial revolution and how it can capitalise on its strengths while embracing the potential for digital transformation and innovation.

In 2025, Friends of Europe will concentrate its work as part of a journey on the **positive applications of AI** on a number of issues, among which conflict-response and public information related to Ukraine, as well as sustainability, education, health.

Digital will also continue to be a transversal topic across Friends of Europe's journeys, cutting across Competitiveness for an inclusive Europe, Carbon Reduction and Sustainable Likelihoods, as well as Security and Enlargement.

**Space policy** activities will emphasise the need for incoming MEPs to understand the importance and applicability of space technologies.

Both Digital and Space will act as transversal issues in the 10 Policy Choices for a Renewed Social Contract and will inform the recommendations on investments, innovation, skills and democracy.

# Press & Podcasts

→ **PRESS:** Keep developing & sustain a press strategy for increased presence on media.

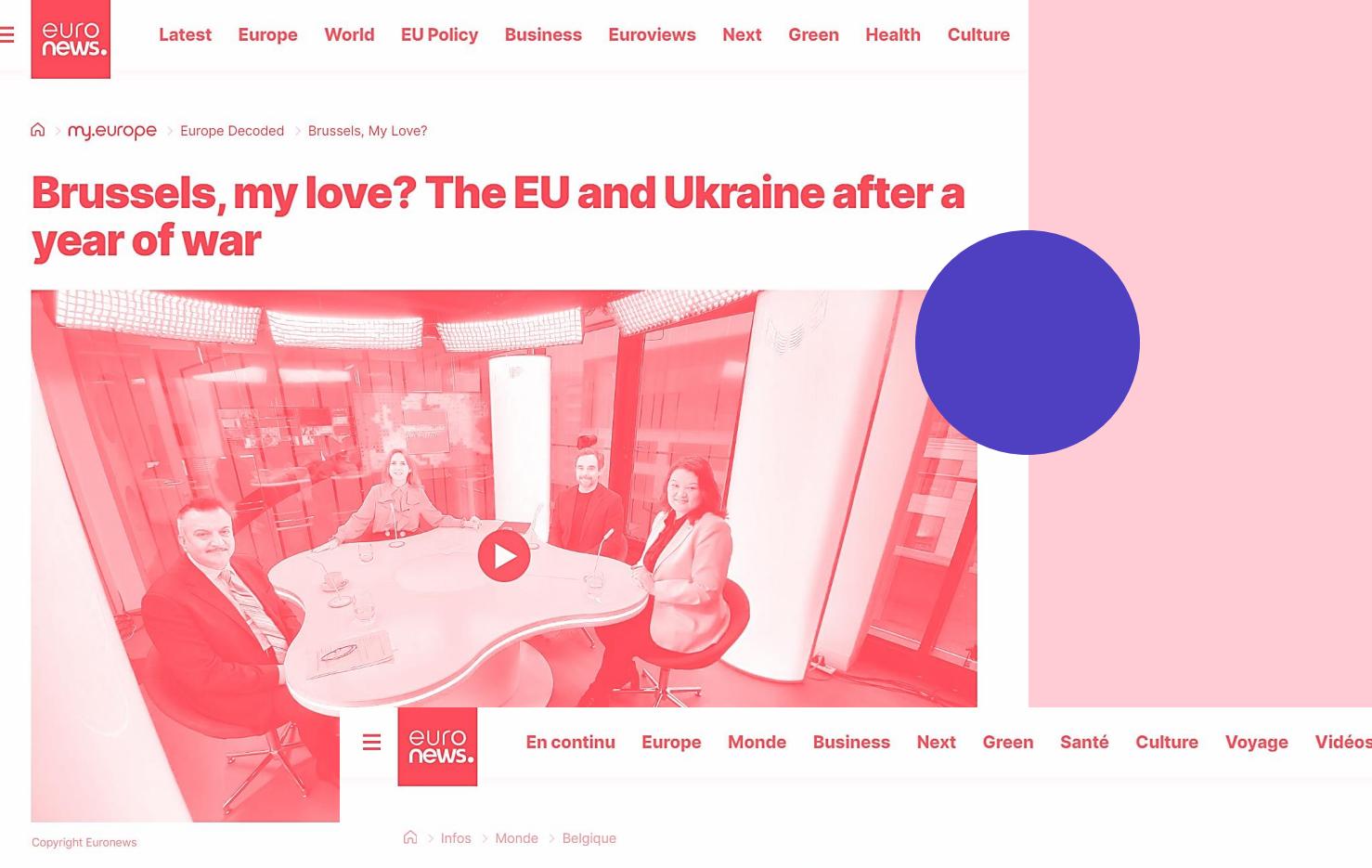
Mentioned in media outlets such as CNN, Reuters, Deutsche Welle, EUObserver, NIKKEI, Euractiv, Foreign Policy, Euronews, and Politico, covering both our activities and expert insights.

→ **PODCASTS:** In September, we started the AI & Democracy series, a special series by Debating Europe delving into the most pressing issues raised by AI in our democracies.

Topics include impact on elections, media literacy, global collaboration, and rules and regulations.

Guests include **Joe Elborn**, Executive Director of the Evens Foundation, **Erika Staël von Holstein**, Co-Founder and Chief Executive of Re-Imagine Europa, **Ramesh Srinivasan**, Professor of Information Studies at UCLA, **Hanne Juncher**, Director of Security, Integrity and Rule of Law at the Council of Europe, **Justin Reynolds**, Director for Tech Policy at the US Department of State, and **Andrea Renda**, Director of Research at the Centre for European Policy Studies.

Our podcasts accumulated **45,4k** plays in 2024.



The screenshot shows the Euronews website with a red header. The main content is a video titled "Brussels, my love? The EU and Ukraine after a year of war". The video thumbnail shows four people sitting around a table in a studio. The Euronews logo is in the top right corner, and a blue circular graphic is in the top right corner of the page.



The screenshot shows the Debating Europe website with a red header. The main content is a video titled "Inna Chevchenko, figure de proue du mouvement Femen : "les Ukrainiens n'abandonneront pas le combat"". The video thumbnail shows a woman speaking at a podium in front of a crowd. The Euronews logo is in the top right corner, and a blue circular graphic is in the top right corner of the page.



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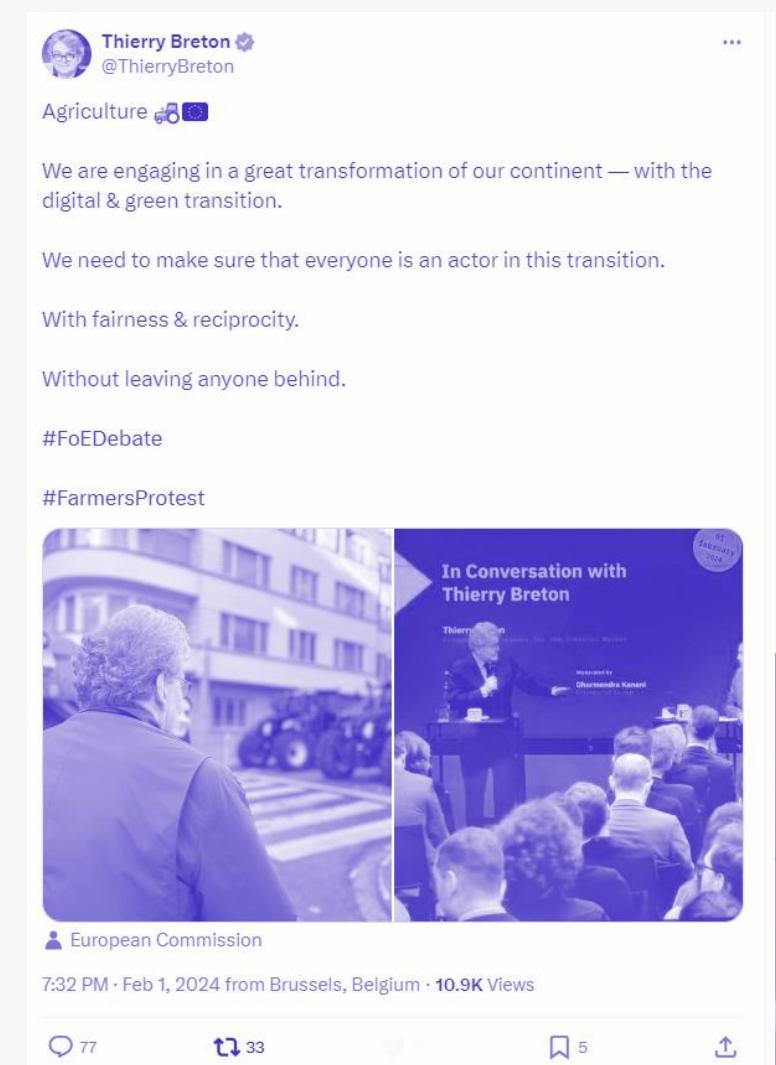
# Social media

351 027  
followers

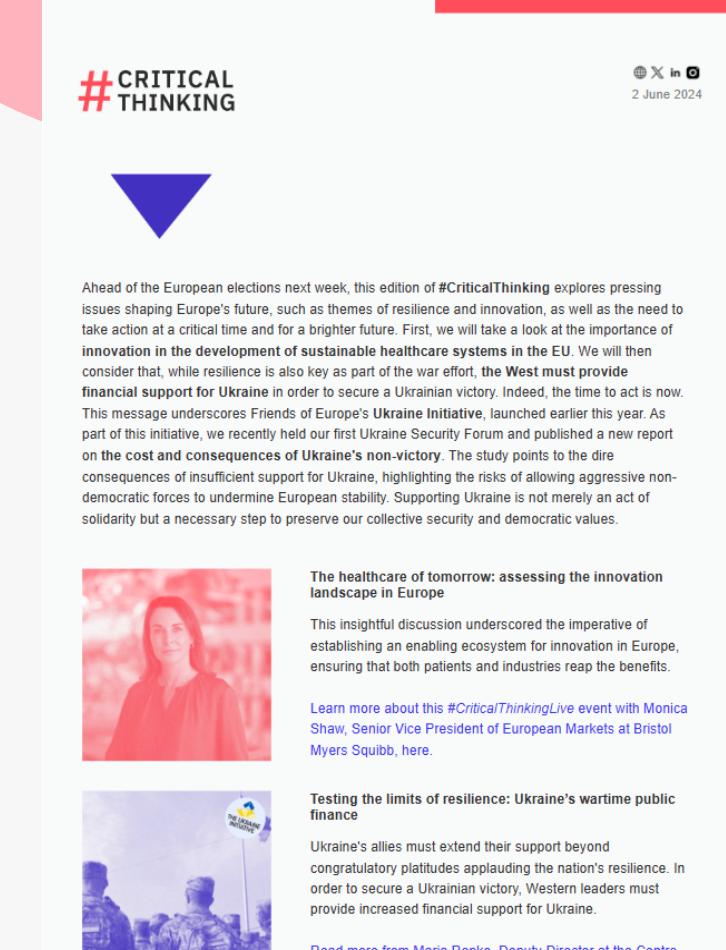
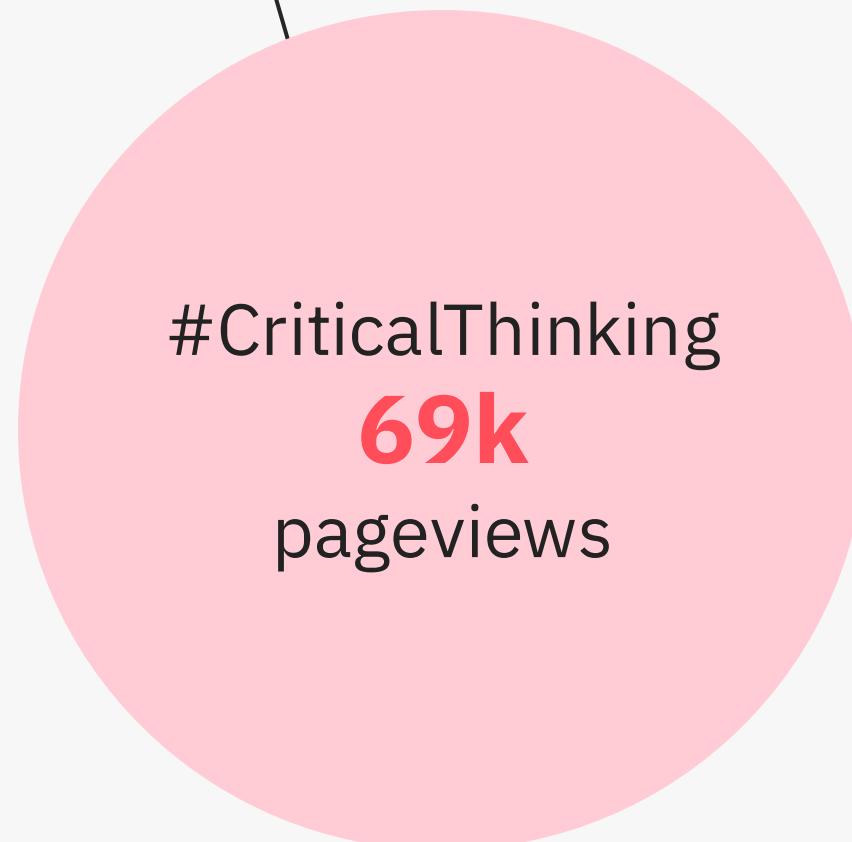
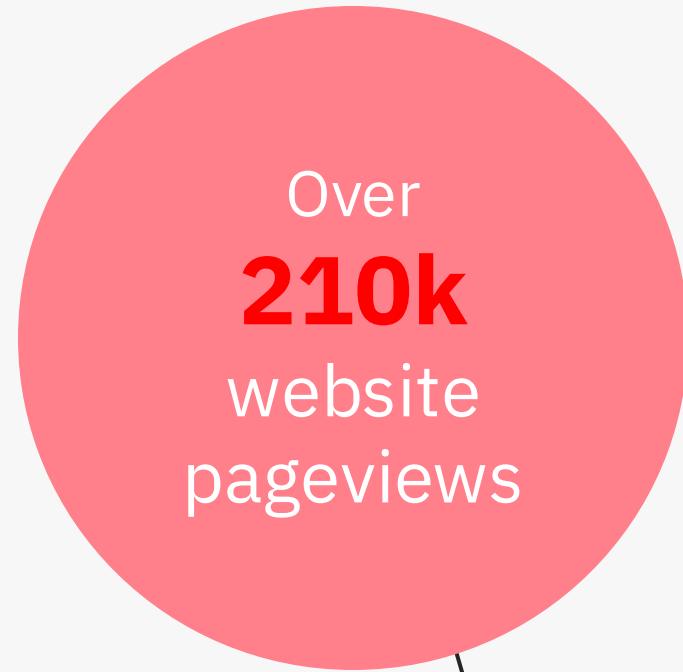


3 729 690  
impressions

9 990  
new  
followers



# Editorial



#CRITICAL  
THINKING

Ahead of the European elections next week, this edition of #CriticalThinking explores pressing issues shaping Europe's future, such as themes of resilience and innovation, as well as the need to take action at a critical time and for a brighter future. First, we will take a look at the importance of innovation in the development of sustainable healthcare systems in the EU. We will then consider that, while resilience is also key as part of the war effort, the West must provide financial support for Ukraine in order to secure a Ukrainian victory. Indeed, the time to act is now. This message underscores Friends of Europe's Ukraine Initiative, launched earlier this year. As part of this initiative, we recently held our first Ukraine Security Forum and published a new report on the cost and consequences of Ukraine's non-victory. The study points to the dire consequences of insufficient support for Ukraine, highlighting the risks of allowing aggressive non-democratic forces to undermine European stability. Supporting Ukraine is not merely an act of solidarity but a necessary step to preserve our collective security and democratic values.

The healthcare of tomorrow: assessing the innovation landscape in Europe

This insightful discussion underscored the imperative of establishing an enabling ecosystem for innovation in Europe, ensuring that both patients and industries reap the benefits.

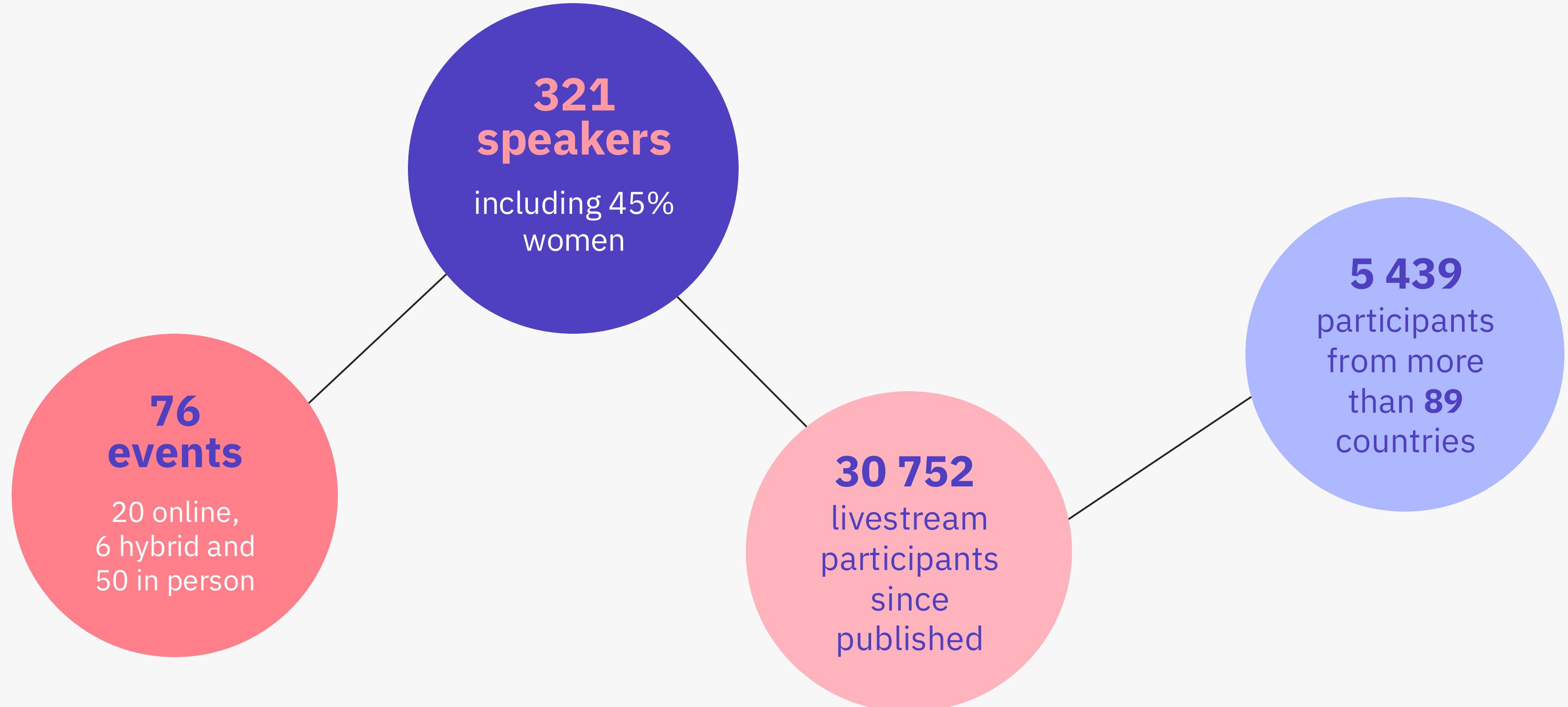
Read more about this #CriticalThinkingLive event with Monica Shaw, Senior Vice President of European Markets at Bristol Myers Squibb, [here](#).

Testing the limits of resilience: Ukraine's wartime public finance

Ukraine's allies must extend their support beyond congratulatory platitudes applauding the nation's resilience. In order to secure a Ukrainian victory, Western leaders must provide increased financial support for Ukraine.

Read more from Maria Reiko, Deputy Director at the Centre

# Events



# Our partners in 2024



Co-funded by the  
European Union

