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Observatoire social européen rapport

Activity Report 2023



European Social Observatory

www.ose.be

Rue du Luxembourg 3 | 1000 Bruxelles | tel: 32 (0)2 537 19 71 | e-mail: info@ose.be

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Introduction

The year 2023 was intense as it marked important transitions at the European Social Observatory (OSE) and set the stage for further changes in 2024. On 1 December, Director Bart Vanhercke embarked on a new journey as Research Director of the European Trade Union Institute. Following in his footsteps, Slavina Spasova, unanimously elected by the *Organe d'administration*, became the new Director of the OSE. Françoise Verri, after 40 years of dedicated service as Financial and Administrative Manager, retired for a well-deserved break. The OSE also welcomed new members to its General Assembly. Last but not least, the historic premises on rue Paul-Emile Janson, where our association had been based since 1984, were sold and we looked for a new location during the second half of 2023.

The year 2023 was also intense in terms of debates and social policy-making at EU level ⁽¹⁾. These happened in the wider context of the upcoming European Parliament elections (scheduled for June 2024) and high-level debates on the future of Europe. These discussions aimed to identify the Union's priorities and address its functioning in a more complex geopolitical landscape and with the potential for further enlargement. Against this backdrop, discussions on the future of the EU, driven by the European Commission, the European Council and Member States, characterised the second half of 2023. While the debate covered many topics and identified several 'grand challenges' for the future, two interrelated issues emerged as top priorities: the geopolitical situation and EU enlargement.

With regard to the social dimension of the EU, the publication of the report of the High-Level Group on the Future of Social Protection and the Welfare State in the EU in January 2023, commissioned by the European Commission, has launched a debate. While this report serves as a promising basis, further efforts are needed to determine how EU social policies and national welfare systems can adapt to the green, digital and demographic transitions in the context of an uncertain geopolitical landscape and possible EU enlargement. Such a discussion, supported at the highest political level and conducted in an open and inclusive manner, would provide essential input for the evaluation of the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) Action Plan for 2025.

The Spanish Presidency has also set ambitious social objectives for the second half of 2023, such as improving access to social protection for non-standard workers and the self-employed and setting up, in cooperation with the future Belgian Presidency, an informal working group on social investment within the context of the reform of the EU's economic governance rules. Indeed, more than three years after the launch of the review of the EU's Stability and Growth Pact (SGP), the European Commission published its long-awaited legislative proposals to reform the framework in April 2023. The European Commission also

1. This section draws on Vanhercke B., Sabato S. and Spasova S. (eds.) (2024) Social policy in the European Union: state of play 2023, An ambitious implementation of the Social Pillar, ETUI and OSE. Download [here](#)

proposed a new strategy in 2023, called the 'Green Deal Industrial Plan for the Net-Zero Age'. While the plan is proving to be a crucial initiative to reduce the EU's dependence on imported clean technologies and raw materials, it has a narrow focus on skills, jobs and growth, overlooking the potential of the EU's new industrial agenda to become a channel for the just transition and for achieving the EU's social ambitions.

In terms of concrete initiatives in the social field, it is worth mentioning the adoption of the Council Recommendation on Adequate Minimum Income in January 2023. Although social actors pushed for a directive, this soft law can be seen as a valuable benchmarking and monitoring tool that social actors can strategically use as a catalyst for policy change, especially when combined with the European Semester (including tailored country-specific recommendations, CSRs) and financial support through the ESF+. Another initiative was the European Commission's proposal for a Directive establishing the European Disability Card and the European Parking Card for people with disabilities in September 2023, following a successful pilot project in eight Member States. Last but not least, a major event in 2023 regarding European social dialogue was the European Commission's Communication on strengthening social dialogue in the EU, published in January (European Commission 2023d). Between 1993 and 2004 (just over a decade), the European Commission published five important communications on European social dialogue, the role that economic and social partners should play in 'European construction' and how this could be made a force for change in Central and Eastern Europe.

This Activity Report is structured as follows: Section 1 provides a brief overview of the OSE's objectives, resources and organisational structure. Section 2 introduces the 2023 OSE team (short biographies) and describes the main roles and activities of each staff member. Section 3 briefly describes each of the projects carried out by the OSE during the past year. Section 4 describes the organisation of the moving process towards new premises. Section 5 presents the events (co-)organised by the OSE during the past year. Section 6 gives an overview of the participation of team members in various external activities. Key output data (i.e. the OSE's 'reach') is presented in Section 5, which also includes some examples of the OSE's 'impact' on policy. Finally, Section 8 shows the full list of publications to which OSE researchers contributed in 2023.

On behalf of the OSE team, I thank you for your interest in our work and wish you an enjoyable reading experience.

Slavina Spasova

Director

1. THE OSE IN A NUTSHELL: GOALS, RESOURCES AND ORGANISATION

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 ‘greening’ of EU recovery 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) since 2016 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, social partner organisations (notably European and national trade unions) and civil society. Its team of researchers – swelled by research associates and interns from all over Europe and North America – is multidisciplinary and multilingual. 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. Since 1999, the OSE has provided substantive input for an annual volume entitled ‘Social policy in the European Union: state of play’, published in cooperation with the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI). The OSE works closely with the European trade union movement – including in the context of the network of Trade Union related Research Institutes (TURI) – and civil society organisations (including the Social Platform).

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

1.1 GOALS

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

- Analyse 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.
- Conduct research and formulate policy proposals.
- Provide an ongoing platform for discussion for a wide range of stakeholders, especially trade union organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).
- Disseminate the results of the projects widely through our in-house resources.

1.2 RESOURCES

The OSE consists of a multidisciplinary and multilingual team of nine researchers bolstered by a highly efficient administrative back office (four people), as well as research associates and regular interns from all over Europe and North America.

Together they:

- Have a variety of expertise in sectoral and cross-cutting areas such as social protection and social inclusion, health, labour market policies, job quality, employment precariousness, the effects of digitalisation, the rights of people with disabilities, gender equality and non-discrimination, the EU's socio-economic governance, the European Green Deal and European pandemic recovery, as well as more recently, the impact of democracy backsliding on social policy.
- Assess the social dimension of European integration through the lenses of a variety of policymaking mechanisms, including the open method of coordination, EU legislation, EU funding and social dialogue.
- Can draw upon a broad-based network of public authorities, (academic and other) researchers, think tanks, European and domestic social partner representatives and other social stakeholders.
- Organise both major (including in the framework of the Belgian Presidencies of the Council of the EU in 2001, 2010 and 2024) and smaller events (including national workshops in several EU Member States).

The OSE provides 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. OSE research reaches a large audience through various communication tools which further boost the dissemination of OSE expertise and knowledge.

These resources include:

The website (www.ose.be, in English and French): a valuable source of up-to-date information on OSE projects, publications, events and staff.

The regular OSE Flash News, providing a quick update on our key events and publications.

The quarterly “European Health Care News” elaborated in English, French and Dutch at the behest of the Belgian National Institute for Health and Disability Insurance (NIHDI, INAMI/RIZIV), and summarising EU developments with a potential impact on national health care systems.

The OSE Paper [Series](#), encompassing three different publications – ‘Research’, ‘Briefing’ and ‘Opinion’ papers – written by the research team as well as by our research associates and external scholars.

External [events](#), during which leading academics, policymakers and stakeholders shed light on issues topping the EU agenda, in the presence of an audience of OSE researchers and their guests.

Our [LinkedIn](#) page (+2,500 followers), institutional [X](#) account (+2,200 followers), our researchers’ profiles on ResearchGate, short videos, podcasts and livestreaming of debates.

1.3 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

The day-to-day management of the OSE was in the hands of Bart Vanhercke, who was Director between 2010 and 1 December 2023. Since that date, Slavina Spasova has been appointed Director (by unanimous decision of the *Organe d'administration*). The Director of OSE is responsible for the coordination of the team as well as the overall research strategy (including calls for tender) and communication. Until October 2023, the Director was assisted in these tasks by Françoise Verri, the OSE's administrative and financial manager, then by Rita Tomioka in the second half of the year, and finally by Philippe Stefano. Françoise Verri managed the administrative team, organisational, budgetary and financial issues, and assisted the Director with calls for tender.

A paragraph on each staff member can be found in Section 2, while more detailed profiles of all team members (scientific and administrative) can be found on the [Team](#) page of the website.

The elected Board of Directors ⁽³⁾ jointly oversees the activities of the OSE, while the General Assembly ⁽⁴⁾, which was partially changed and enlarged in 2023, brings together the broader group of stakeholders linked to the OSE. These include representatives from national and

3. See <https://www.ose.be/board-of-directors>

4. See <https://www.ose.be/general-assembly>

European trade union organisations, trade union-related research institutes, academic institutions and the International Labour Organization.

The Scientific Advisory Board ⁽⁵⁾ 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 ‘Bilan Social’.

The Associate Researchers ⁽⁶⁾ are high-quality academics in the area of social policies and political sciences with whom OSE has collaborates on research projects, publications and organisation of events.

1.4 FUNDING

The diversity of the projects described in Section 3 below demonstrates that the OSE continues to be funded from a variety of sources, which include:

- Research contracts and subsidies from Belgian federal and regional authorities, including notably the longstanding collaboration with the Belgian National Institute for Health and Disability Insurance (NIHDI/INAMI/RIZIV) (10,84%) and the Federal Public Service Social Security (*SPF Sécurité sociale*) (9,92%). In total, these resources provided 20,76% of our 2023 funding.
- Contracts with European and international institutions, notably the European Commission. These resources provided 33,20% of our 2023 funding.
- Wage subsidies from Belgian federal and regional authorities, since the creation of the institute, from the Brussels regional employment office (Actiris) (23,45%); and since 2013 the partial withholding tax exemption for research from the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office (La Politique scientifique fédérale, BELSPO) (11,18%). Altogether these subsidies made up 34,63% of our funding in 2023.
- Other subsidies, since the creation of the institute, from the Belgian Confederation of Christian Trade Unions (CSC/ACV) (5,77%) and contracts with the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) (3,86%). This trade union-related funding accounted for 9,62% of our budget in 2023.
- Other resources, including various academic collaborations, training and consultancy represented 1,79% of our 2023 budget.

5. See <https://www.ose.be/scientific-committee>

6. See <https://www.ose.be/team>

2. THE OSE STAFF: GOLDEN PARAGRAPHS

In 2023, the OSE consisted of a team of 13 people: nine researchers (both full-time and part-time) (including the Director) and four full-time administrative staff. This year has seen some important staff changes: we were pleased to welcome Rita Tomioka and Philippe Stefano to the administrative team.

2.1 THE SCIENTIFIC TEAM

Dr. Angelina Atanasova – Researcher – Rights of persons with disabilities, rule of law

Dr. Angelina Atanasova (PhD in EU law) is a multidisciplinary researcher, with strong methodological quantitative and qualitative research skills, and more than 10 years of experience in EU social and equality policies. She has been a researcher at the European Social Observatory since September 2021. Previously, Angelina has gained solid experience both in academia as well as in the private sector as a Research Manager in social policy projects, conducted for DG EAC and DG EMPL of the European Commission, as well as a consultant on equality and non-discrimination at the Open Society European Policy Institute, where she coordinated a comparative cross-country research advocacy project on sensitive data collection, equality and social inclusion.

At the OSE, Angelina covers the rights of persons with disabilities as well as legal integration of EU social policies (more specifically, the role of the Court of Justice of the European Union in the social policy domain). In 2023, she obtained her PhD at the Public Law Department of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (Belgium), where she is currently associated as a volunteer researcher. Her doctoral thesis focuses on the key role of civic actors (especially, trade unions) and lawyers in triggering the preliminary ruling procedure (Article 267 TFEU) in EU law disputes regarding social policy in the cases of Belgium and Denmark.

In 2023 Angelina led a thematic group on disability rights in the framework of the academic support of the Belgian Presidency project, conducted in cooperation between the OSE and the University of Antwerp. Together with the OSE director, Angelina has been working towards introducing and developing a new strand of research for the OSE, focusing on the rights of persons with disabilities (in general and in employment).

Angelina has further substantially contributed to several projects at the OSE, among which the different deliverables of the European Social Policy Network (ESPN). She co-authored the Synthesis Report on ‘Making access to social protection for workers and the self-employed more transparent through information and simplification’ (⁷). She also coordinated the work on and co-authored the European Digest/International Digest of the

7. Led by Slavina Spasova, and other co-authored by Sebastiano Sabato and Federico Moja.

Belgian Review for Social Security (*Revue Belge de Sécurité Sociale*). Angelina further contributed to an ETUI and an SPF *Sécurité sociale* calls for tender, and to OSE's overall dissemination of research and publication strategy.

Rita Baeten – Senior policy analyst – Healthcare and European integration

Rita Baeten, Master of Social Sciences, has focused her research (since 1999) on the impact of European integration on national health systems and their social aspects. Her research topics include inequalities in access to health care; EU economic governance and health systems; patient mobility; health services in the internal market; and EU cooperation in health. Rita Baeten advises NIHDI on EU policy developments with a potential impact on health care in Belgium and has coordinated the scientific preparation and follow-up of several international and ministerial conferences on EU integration and health systems. She has led the OSE contribution to several projects funded by the European Commission under its research framework programmes. Since September 2022 and during 2023, Rita has joined the cabinet of Franck Vandenbrouke, Vice-Minister and Minister for Social Affairs and Public Health, as a detached expert in support of the forthcoming Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union (January - June 2024).

Dalila Ghailani – Senior researcher – European Law, employment and work, social protection, gender equality

Dalila Ghailani, with a Master's in law and advanced Master's in European business law, has 23 years of experience in monitoring a range of issues related to the social dimension of the EU, including quality of employment and work, in-work poverty, social protection, poverty and social exclusion, social assistance and minimum income, digitalisation of work and digital transition, and gender issues. She has conducted several studies for EU institutions (including the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Economic and Social Committee) and European Trade Unions. Member of the European network TURI (Trade Union related Research Institutes), she is also actively engaged with European stakeholders' networks. She is a regular contributor to the ESPN (European Social Policy Network) reports.

During 2023, Dalila continued the co-managing (with Bart Vanhercke) of the European research project DIGIQU@LPUB. She co-organized and acted as speaker for the Roundtable discussion which took place in Warsaw in April and the final conference in Brussels in September 2023. She co-authored with Ramon Peña-Casas an OSE Working Paper on 'The ambivalent and ambiguous impacts of digitalisation on job quality of workers in public services in the European Union. The case of electricity production and supply, hospital, and public administration sectors' and a policy brief on 'The pervasiveness of digitalisation and

its ambivalent impacts on job quality of public services workers in the EU' (also available in French and German). Dalila is the main author (with Ramon Peña-Casas) of the final report of the project.

In 2023, the Horizon 2020 research project 'Working Yet Poor' (WorkYP), in which Dalila participated, came to an end and the OSE submitted its second deliverable, dedicated to policy proposals to strengthen the social content of EU social citizenship. Furthermore, a book chapter on 'Policy Proposals at EU level to better address in-work poverty while implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights' was written for the academic volume of the project. Dalila was also a speaker at the final conference held in Brussels.

Throughout 2023, Dalila has been involved in the new EU Horizon Europe project on 'Welfare systems and labour market policies for economic and social resilience in Europe' (WeLaR). In this project, Dalila is particularly involved in the work package on 'Preferences, policies and social innovation', which is tasked with formulating overall policy conclusions and recommendations and proposing opportunities for capacity building.

In the ESPAN context, Dalila has contributed to the process of reviewing national 'country profiles'.

Dr Jessica Martini – Researcher – Health care and European integration

Jessica Martini, PhD in Public Health Sciences (from the Université libre de Bruxelles, ULB), joined the OSE in March 2022 to work in the field of health, and in particular on the impact of European integration on national health systems, within the framework of the policy support project funded by NIHDI. Her previous experience at the School of Public Health of the ULB includes an extensive participation (from 2010 to 2018) in policy support research in the field of international aid to the health sector of low-income countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. Her studies have covered topics related to the governance of both development cooperation and the health sector, with a particular focus on non-communicable diseases, patient advocacy, and international support to civil society. Her research involved the use of qualitative methods and constructivist approaches to policy analysis, drawing on Jessica's multidisciplinary background in political science, development studies and public health. From 2018 to 2022, she also taught an advanced course on health systems analysis in different contexts (high-, middle- and low-income countries). Since October 2022, she continues to collaborate with the ULB for the supervision and evaluation of students' master's and doctoral theses in public health, and as a scientific collaborator of the Research Centre for Social Approaches to Health.

One of the main outputs of the NIHDI-funded policy support project is the publication of the quarterly online newsletter "European Health Care News" in three languages (Dutch, French and English). This provides information on important developments with a potential impact

on the Belgian and other European health care systems. In order to gather relevant information, Jessica carried out regular horizon scanning in a wide range of areas of EU policy and law, including public health, internal market, social and economic policy, EU funding, competition, case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union and infringement procedures. In 2023, Jessica wrote and coordinated the publication of the four quarterly issues of the European Health Care Newsletter. She also launched a reflection on how the newsletter layout and webpage could be updated and modernised. With Benoît Malice and Renaud Smoes from the administrative staff, she worked during the last months of the year to develop an advertising campaign and to notably design a flyer on the newsletter for dissemination at events organised during the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU in the first semester of 2024.

On the research side, Jessica dedicated the first quarter of 2023 to the coordination and drafting of the final report of a study carried out with Alban Davesne (OsloMet University) and aiming to understand how health and health care targets are set in other European countries, with a particular focus on the governance processes through which these targets are set, monitored and funded. This study was intended to provide food for thought to the Belgian health authorities regarding the launch of national health and health care targets as an instrument to guide health policies (Ministry of health) and the budgetary trajectory (NIHDI). The final report was submitted to NIHDI in April and underwent an external review from the end of 2023 in view of its future publication.

In the framework of preparing the health agenda for the Belgian Presidency of the EU, Jessica was involved in the working group specifically dedicated to the topic of access to health care. She notably took part in and coordinated a study on affordable access to health care, aiming to inform the policy debate on this topic during the Belgian Presidency. The study explored three main questions: 1) what actions can the EU undertake to operationalise its own objectives regarding access to care; 2) what policy instruments are already in use and what can be improved to support Member States in strengthening access to healthcare; 3) priorities to be set by the next EU legislature. The article was published at the end of 2023 in a special issue of the *Euro Health Journal* dedicated to the health agenda of the Belgian presidency of the EU.

Korina Kominou – Researcher –Employment, social policies, vulnerable workers, flexible employment relations, labour inequalities

Korina Kominou is a social policy researcher with a multidisciplinary educational background that combines the theoretical basis of social policy and labour market theories (BSc and Research MSc) with specified knowledge of EU Labour Law (LL.M). She joined the OSE in July 2022. Her scientific work covers the fields of employment social policies, comparative employment relations, inequalities and vulnerable workers in the labour

market. On behalf of the OSE, she is participating in the Network Core Team of the European Social Policy Network (ESPN). Previously, she worked for several years in the Greek public sector, in national-scale social policy organisations as a social policy officer. Korina also coordinated various projects with a range of stakeholders in the Greek public employment service (PES), the gender equality secretariat of the Greek Ministry of Labour and consulting companies. She has participated in research teams and has acted as leader of research groups on EU and ILO research projects about labour market inequalities and early job insecurity, changes in the institutional framework of the labour markets in the EU and relevant determinants, transnational digital networks affecting migration and gender.

During 2023, Korina worked on social protection issues in the context of the European Social Policy Analysis Network (ESPAN) project, and co-authored the thematic synthesis reports on energy poverty and pension adequacy in the EU Member States. She also contributed to the 2023 Country Profiles of the ESPAN project. In addition, she drafted the chapter on Chronology - Key events for the European Union - State of play 2023. Korina has also worked as a lead researcher in the renewed contract with the *SPF Sécurité sociale* on the review of European social policy developments. The contract includes bi-annual chapters that are published in the *Revue belge de sécurité sociale* and cover all major developments in Social Europe during the reference period. Korina worked on the Horizon 2020 project 'Working, Yet Poor' (WORKYP) and co-authored a book chapter on 'Policy Proposals at EU level to better address in-work poverty while implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights' (published in Ratti L. & Schoukens P. (eds) *Working, Yet Poor. Challenges to EU Social Citizenship* (Hart Publishing)). She also co-authored two WORKYP reports, namely 'Policy proposals to enhance the social content of EU social citizenship' (Deliverable 5.4) and 'Policy recommendations for European Union stakeholders to tackle in-work poverty'. Korina also worked as a research assistant on the project 'Pension credits in occupational pension schemes'. During 2023, Korina also contributed to the development of new tenders and projects for the OSE, while participating in various collective administrative and organisational activities.

Ramón Peña-Casas – Senior researcher – Employment and work, job quality, poverty, social inclusion, digitalisation, industrial relations

Ramón Peña-Casas, with a Master's in Social Sciences obtained in 1987 and several years of professional experience in applied research, joined the OSE team in 2000. His diverse areas of expertise in the field of socio-economic analysis cover, in particular, the diagnosis and comparative analysis of cross-cutting socio-economic issues affecting the various aspects of the European Union's social dimension: poverty and social exclusion, social assistance and minimum income, digitalisation of work and digital transition, quality of employment and work, in-work poverty, insecure employment, working conditions, active labour market

policies and activation, flexicurity, active ageing as well as youth policy, restructuring and social dialogue. Ramón has coordinated many European and national projects on a range of subjects and is well-versed in the development, quality and political use of statistical indicators. Ramón Peña-Casas 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'.

During 2023, Ramón Peña-Casas led the scientific coordination of the European research project on the "Impact of Digitalisation on Job Quality and Social Dialogue in Public Services" (DIGIQU@LPUB), bringing together 11 research partners from 8 countries. He also led the work package dedicated to the horizontal analysis of the impact of digitalisation on the job quality of public service workers in eight EU countries. DIGIQU@LPUB will conclude with a final conference in September 2023. Numerous outputs have been produced and published as OSE working papers. Ramón is the main author (with Dalila Ghailani) of the final report and the policy paper on the impact of digitalisation on the different dimensions of quality in work, also available in French and German.

Ramón also led the OSE team in the EU Horizon 2020 research project 'Working, Yet Poor' (WorkYP - 2020-2023). In 2023, the project came to an end and OSE presented its outputs, two transversal policy papers (co-authored with Dalila Ghailani and Korina Kominou). The first is dedicated to the findings of the project and proposes recommendations to EU stakeholders to tackle in-work poverty among vulnerable groups of workers, while the second is dedicated to policy proposals to enhance the social content of EU social citizenship. Furthermore, a book chapter on "Policy Proposals at EU level to better address in-work poverty while implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights" has been prepared for the academic book of the project ⁽⁸⁾

Another Horizon Europe research project involving the OSE is the project on 'Welfare systems and labour market policies for economic and social resilience in Europe' (WeLaR - 2022-2025). In this project, Ramón Peña-Casas will lead the OSE team as leader of a work package on 'Preferences, policies and social innovation', with the task of formulating general policy conclusions and recommendations and proposing opportunities for capacity building. The OSE will also support the leaders of several research work packages in preparing their policy briefs and will contribute to a foresight exercise at the end of the project. During 2023, the OSE will launch comprehensive desktop research on the numerous social and

8. Ratti L. & Schoukens P. (eds) (2023) Working, Yet Poor - Challenges to EU Social Citizenship, Hart/Bloomsbury Publishing:United Kingdom.

employment policy challenges related to the major transitions covered by the WeLaR project.

Dr Sebastiano Sabato – Senior researcher – European integration, EU social policies and governance, socio-ecological transition

Sebastiano Sabato holds a PhD in Political Sciences from the *Istituto Italiano di Scienze Umane* (SUM) in Florence (2013) and a Master's degree in economics and politics of European integration from the University of Bologna, Faculty of Political Sciences (Forlì). Since February 2014 he has been working as a researcher on European integration, and since February 2019 as a senior researcher at the OSE and is responsible for monitoring funding opportunities (with Bart Vanhercke). In 2013, he worked as a post-doctoral researcher at the Department of Social and Political Science of the University of Milan and, in 2014-2015, he worked at the Department of Sociology at Antwerp University. Since January 2019, he has been a member of the Scientific Committee of the journal '*Politiche Sociali/Social Policies*'. His current research interests include EU socio-economic governance (including in the context of the EU's recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic), EU and national social protection and social inclusion policies, social innovation, social dialogue, and the socio-ecological transition.

During 2023, Sebastiano continued to work on topics related to the strengthening of the social dimension of the EU, particularly in the context of the ecological transition set by European policy. The interplay between the ecological and social dimensions remained the main focus of Sebastiano's academic work. He continued his research on the socio-environmental transition at the EU level and on the principle of "leaving no one behind" in the process of a just transition. In this context, Sebastiano also worked on and published two articles in peer-reviewed journals.

Sebastiano has conducted research on the 'socio-ecological' dimension of national recovery and resilience plans and on the gradual development of an EU framework for a just transition (the latter in the framework of a project funded by the Belgian Federal Public Service - Social Security aimed at providing scientific expertise for the preparation of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU in the first half of 2024). In the context of the ESPN, Sebastiano contributed to the research for the preparation of the report 'Making access to social protection for workers and the self-employed more transparent through information and simplification'. Sebastiano was also one of the editors (with Bart Vanhercke and Slavina Spasova) of the 2023 edition of 'Social Policy in the European Union', besides co-authoring a chapter (with Sotiria Theodoropoulou) and the conclusions of the volume (with Bart Vanhercke and Slavina Spasova). He also continued to explore potential funding opportunities for future OSE research projects. In the ESPAN context, Sebastiano led the

process of reviewing the national 'country profiles'. In addition, Sebastiano conducted research on strengthening the EU Health Union and beyond, focusing on access to health care in the context of the Belgian Presidency of the EU. Sebastiano has also been invited to speak at a number of seminars, webinars and (policy and academic) conferences.

Dr Slavina Spasova – Senior researcher – Social protection, pension reforms, trade unions and social dialogue and OSE’s Director since December 2023

Slavina Spasova, PhD in Political Science (*Université Libre de Bruxelles, ULB*), was a researcher in the area of social protection at the OSE starting January 2016, a senior researcher between 2021 and 2023 and Director since December 2023. She is both OSE coordinator and overall pension leader in the European Social Policy Analysis Network (ESPAN, previously ESPN). Her research agenda focuses on various social policy issues linked to social protection, including pension reforms, work-life balance, healthcare, long-term care, sickness benefits, etc. Slavina is also a research associate at the *Centre d’étude de la vie politique* (CEVIPOL), ULB. Since September 2020, she has also been working as an assessor (*experte invitée*) of Master theses 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. Since October 2021, Slavina has also joined the editorial team of the Society and Politics section of the open access journal Heliyon (Elsevier publishing). 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’.

Slavina Spasova coordinated three research outputs during 2023.

Within the first one, Slavina coordinated the team (OSE, KUL, University of Antwerp) and co-lead a report providing expertise to the Belgian Presidency on possible initiatives in the field of social protection (with Paul Schoukens, Professor of European Social Security Law at KUL).

The latter was presented by Slavina and Paul Schoukens at closed seminars organised by the *SPF Sécurité Sociale* with various stakeholders to prepare the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union (see also section 7.2 on impact).

Secondly, Slavina led an ESPAN report on measures to combat energy poverty in the European Union (see also section 7.2 on impact). Third, Slavina also led for the third time (2017, 2020 and 2023) the ESPAN deliverable on pension reforms and other aspects of public pensions, which feeds into the Pension adequacy report (to be published in 2024). Slavina is writing the chapter on pension reforms.

Slavina has also contributed to other projects and publications such as care credits in occupational pension schemes, a paper for a mutual learning event on Access to social protection for employees and the self-employed: a focus on transparency and a chapter on Bulgarian trade unions in a seminal volume on the state of trade unionism in Europe by Waddington, J., Müller, T. and Vandaele, K. (see section 8). She was also co-editor with Bart Vanhercke (main editor) of 'Social policy in the European Union: state of play 2023' (the 23rd edition of the 'Bilan social'). In 2023, Slavina presented her research and views at twenty-one events, ranging from expert workshops providing expertise to policy makers to academic lectures.

On 1 December, Slavina became the Director of the European Social Observatory during an important transition period: change of Director, financial manager, move to new premises and change of some staff members.

Dr Bart Vanhercke – Director until December 2023 – European integration, social protection and social inclusion, governance

Bart Vanhercke, PhD in Social Science (Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research, AISSR), was the director and senior researcher at the OSE between 2010 and December 2023. He was therefore in charge of the broad research strategy, the internal organisation of the team, managing the budget (with Françoise Verri), and implementing the OSE tendering and communication strategies. His research focuses on the social dimension of the new European economic governance, including in the context of the EU's recovery. Bart Vanhercke was appointed, for the academic year 2013-2014, Associate Professor at the Institute for European Studies of Saint-Louis University (FUSL) and became Policy Fellow at the Institute for the Study of Labour (IZA Berlin) in November 2015. He was appointed associate member of the academic staff at the Research Institute for Work and Society (HIVA, KULeuven) in June 2016 and was a visiting professor at the College of Europe during the academic year 2020-2021. He is the author of around 130 articles, chapters, edited volumes and reports.

During 2023, Bart Vanhercke was again the lead editor, together with Sebastiano Sabato and Slavina Spasova, of the OSE's flagship book on 'Social policy in the European Union: state of play 2023' (EN-FR). Bart was also the lead author of the book's conclusions (Policymaking in a state of permacrisis: can the EU uphold its social ambitions?), signed by the editors. Bart continued his work as social protection leader of the European Social Policy Network (ESPN), in close coordination with Slavina Spasova. In 2023, Bart also co-managed (with Dalila Ghailani and Ramón Peña-Casas) the EU-funded project on the impact of digitalisation on job quality and social dialogue (DIGIQU@LPUB). He actively contributed to the writing and coordination of several competitive tenders. Bart also presented his research and views

at several online events. Bart also managed, together with Slavina Spasova, the OSE Paper Series and contributed to the *International Digest* of the Belgian Review for Social Security (with Angelina Atanasova).

2.2 THE OSE BACK OFFICE: THE ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

Deborah Lehane – Administrative assistant

Deborah Lehane began working at the OSE on March 2022 as an administrative assistant. Her tasks consist in answering telephone calls, drafting minutes during team meetings, sending and receiving institutional emails (internal and external communication). She's also in charge of copy-editing, checking references and harmonising in the OSE Paper Series and the annual '*Bilan social*', as well as proofreading the 'European Health Care News' newsletter. Deborah also assists with interview transcriptions and layout of documents, and contributes to all aspects of organising OSE events.

Benoît Malice – Web and Logistics Assistant

Benoît Malice is responsible for the layout of the OSE Paper Series. He carries out a number of tasks in support of the website: contributing to the various sections of the site, HTML layout of the 'European Health Care News' newsletter (in French, Dutch and English); corrections and additions to the various sections (in French and English); checking web pages; adding new content; and updating bibliographic references. Benoît provides logistical support for conferences (preparation of documents) and assists with various administrative tasks. He manages the logistics of OSE supplies. He supervises the office management and coordinates the work (heating, lighting, air conditioning, etc.) with the building manager. He sends the daily Bulletin Europe in PDF format in French and English to OSE researchers and members.

Renaud Smoes – Webmaster

Renaud Smoes manages the IT equipment and security, manages and updates the OSE website, project websites and contact database. During 2023, Renaud managed the updates of the infrastructure and security solutions for the OSE website with the support of Lab360.

In the second half of the year, Renaud coordinated the "OSE Moving" task force and was directly involved in a number of tasks related to the preparations for OSE's move to new offices.

He also managed the Microsoft 365 platform, which is used to manage the OSE's common agenda and the flow of documents in collaborative research projects such as ESPAN. He

manages the OSE Flash News and the 'European Health Care News' newsletter (HTML layout, distribution, mailing list) for the NIHDI contract. He has also managed websites for one-off projects. He is responsible for the IT aspects of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). His other tasks include the organisation of events (invitations, subscription management, reception, technical support) and the production of graphic material for researchers, slides and visual aids for OSE events.

Françoise Verri – Financial and administrative manager until September 2023

Françoise Verri, with the OSE Director, managed all calls for tender (e.g. drafting budgets, planning tables, checking and proofreading of the OSE offers and online registration), managed the finances of the institution, produced financial reports for all projects (both European and national), drew up the budgets, checked all OSE's contracts, and was responsible for the administrative management (staff, relations with outside bodies, supplies, etc.). She managed the accounting of the institution, prepared the accounts and all documents for the OSE governing bodies and drafted the minutes of the key meetings: the four-monthly Board of Directors and annual General Assembly. She made payments, was responsible for invoicing and VAT as well as for the organisation and practical coordination of books, papers, programmes and invitations, the final revision of notes and reports and managing translations for the various publications. Finally, she also organised all the national and international OSE events.

Rita Tomioka Padilla – Accounting and Administrative assistant

Rita started working at the OSE in June 2023 as an accounting assistant. She is responsible for tracking and coding invoices and payments. Rita is also responsible for human resources management, including communication with the *Sécrétariat social* and Actiris. Rita also assists with administrative tasks and helps organise OSE events.

2.3 INTERNSHIPS

The OSE concluded an internship agreement with the University of Milan. The University of Amsterdam, the *Université Libre de Bruxelles* (ULB) and Brigham Young University (Utah, United States) have been sending students on a regular basis, while we regularly receive direct applications from individuals. As a result, bachelor and master students in political science, sociology, economics, and law make ongoing contributions to the OSE research activities. For most OSE interns their stay at the OSE is a mandatory part of their curriculum, for which they receive a bursary from the sending institution.

The OSE provides these students with opportunities to network with top researchers and politicians in various fields, as well as (in case of an outstanding internship) giving them letters of recommendation that they can take to future job interviews. For many interns at the OSE, it is the first time that they get to experience work in research, which often proves to be invaluable in their future career decisions and opportunities. Interns are involved at different levels in a variety of research projects covering all employment and social fields. They help by drafting minutes of events, conducting qualitative research, editing work, interview transcriptions and translations. Interns' written pieces regularly appear in OSE publications, and are acknowledged as such: in several cases, interns have been recognised as co-authors. An overview of the 2023 interns can be found in Table 3.

Table 3. Interns and visiting researchers 2023

| | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Giorgia Fleischmann | 1 April 2023 - 29 July 2023 | University of Milan |
| Gudsiyya Allahverdiyeva | 1 February – 29 July 2023 | KULeuven University |

3. NUTS AND BOLTS: RESEARCH PROJECTS CARRIED OUT IN 2023

This section provides a snapshot overview of the 13 projects managed by the OSE team in 2023. More details on each of them can be found on the project page of the OSE website.

3.1 EUROPEAN SOCIAL POLICY ANALYSIS NETWORK (ESPAN 2022-2026) (9)

The European Social Policy Analysis Network replaces 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. The new network currently covers 38 countries: the 27 EU Member States, seven candidate and potential candidate countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey) as well as Ukraine, Moldova, Norway and Iceland. It also provides ad hoc social policy analysis for an additional set of countries inside and outside Europe. Finally, the ESPAN acts as the

9. ESPAN network <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1135>

secretariat to MISSOC (Mutual Information Systems on Social Protection¹⁰). At the heart of the ESPN are 35 Country Teams of independent experts on social policies who are supported and coordinated by a central team of international experts. The ESPN is managed jointly by the LISER Research Institute (lead partner, based in Luxembourg), the independent research company APPLICA (Belgium) and the OSE (Social Protection Leader).

OSE researchers involved: Slavina Spasova (lead researcher), Rita Baeten, Dalila Ghailani, Ramón Peña-Casas, Angelina Atanasova, Jessica Martini, Sebastiano Sabato, and Bart Vanhercke.

3.2 FOLLOW UP OF EU-LEVEL DEVELOPMENTS WITH AN IMPACT ON HEALTH CARE SYSTEMS (NIHDI-RIZIV-INAMI) (2022-2024)

The OSE was awarded a three-year project (from 2022 to 2024) to provide the Belgian National Institute for Health and Disability Insurance (NIHDI-INAMI-RIZIV) and the Belgian health authorities with expertise and analysis on EU policies with a potential impact on national health care systems. This project is the continuation of a longstanding collaboration between the OSE and the NIHDI in this field.

The project includes: a) the scientific underpinning of health care-related initiatives developed as part of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU, notably through the drafting of an article exploring how the EU can support Member States to further ensure everyone's access to affordable health care; b) a study on the use of health and health care targets in EU countries and the extent to which these practices could be relevant in the Belgian context; c) the assessment of progress made in the implementation of the recommendations adopted in 2014 by NIHDI to improve access to health care in Belgium and support to the organisation of a one-day workshop on this topic; d) expert advice on EU policies with a potential impact on health care systems in general and the Belgian healthcare system in particular; e) the publication of a quarterly electronic newsletter on recent EU developments with a potential impact on national health care systems. OSE researchers involved: Rita Baeten (2022), Jessica Martini (2022, 2023) and Sebastiano Sabato (2023).

3.3 HORIZON 2020 - WORKING, YET POOR – WorkYP (2020-2023)

Since 2020, the OSE was partner in a Horizon 2020 European research project named 'Working, Yet Poor' (WorkYP). The final conference of the project was held in Brussels the 26 January 2023.

The project (2020-2023) was coordinated by the University of Luxembourg and involves eight European universities as well as three social rights institutions, including the OSE and

the European Anti-poverty network (EAPN). The consortium explores the drivers of the recurrent phenomenon of in-work poverty (IWP) in the EU in light of social rights of EU workers and citizens, notably those proclaimed in the EPSR. The project made recommendations to the EU and Member States to strengthen the objectives of the EPSR.

WorkYP covers seven countries: Belgium, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, Sweden and the Netherlands. In each country, four clusters of particularly Vulnerable and Underrepresented Persons (VUP) have been identified. WorkYP uses a multifaceted and multidisciplinary methodology that combines legal and socio-economic analysis. In addition to being involved in various analytical work packages (WPs), the OSE was leader of a WP aiming to draw up recommendations and policy proposals to tackle IWP by improving the social rights of the VUP. The OSE team delivered two policy papers and wrote a chapter in the book of the project ⁽¹¹⁾ with OSE researchers involved: Ramón Peña-Casas (project leader), Dalila Ghailani, Korina Kominou and Bart Vanhercke.

3.4 HORIZON EUROPE - WELFARE SYSTEMS AND LABOUR MARKET POLICIES FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESILIENCE IN EUROPE (WELAR) (2022-2025)

The OSE is a partner in a new Horizon Europe-funded research project (2022-2025) looking at ‘Welfare systems and Labour market policies for economic and social resilience in Europe’ (‘WeLaR’). The project is coordinated by the Research Institute for Work and Society (HIVA, KU Leuven) and brings together 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). It investigates the impact of four megatrends – namely the technological revolution, globalisation, climate, and demographic changes – on European labour markets and welfare states. The project aims to provide a comparative diagnosis and to develop policy recommendations. The OSE is the leader of the work package on ‘Preferences, policy and social innovation’, which is tasked with formulating policy conclusions and recommendations, and proposing opportunities for capacity-building.

OSE researchers involved: Ramón Peña-Casas (project leader), Dalila Ghailani, Korina Kominou and Slavina Spasova.

11. Peña-Casas R., Ghailani D., and Kominou K., (2023) Policy Proposals at EU level to better address in-work poverty while implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights, in Ratti L. & Schoukens P. (eds) Working, Yet Poor. Challenges to EU Social Citizenship (Hart Publishing)-Book Chapter

3.5 DIGITALISATION AND JOB QUALITY (2021-2023)

In 2023, the OSE successfully completed the two-year (2021-2023) European research project on the ‘Impact of digitalisation on job quality and social dialogue in the public services’ (DIGIQU@LPUB). The project was funded through the European Commission budget line ‘Improving expertise in the field of industrial relations’ (VP/2020/004) and led by the OSE in association with the European Public Services Union (EPSU). In recent years, public service workers are increasingly using connected tools and methods that shape the way their job tasks are implemented, scheduled, controlled, and ultimately benefit public service users. DIGIQU@LPUB aimed at improving understanding of the impact of digitalisation on job quality in the public services, by highlighting the perceptions that workers themselves have of the changes generated by digitalisation in the performance of their daily tasks. It also aimed to raise awareness among trade unions and decisionmakers of the consequences of the digital transition of work for the public services.

At the core of the project were eight case studies in as many countries: Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland and Spain. The focus is on three public service sectors: electricity suppliers, public administrations (national/regional/local governments) and hospitals (health care services). The partnership brings together twelve institutions across the EU ⁽¹²⁾.

OSE researchers involved: Ramón Peña-Casas (leader and scientific coordinator), Dalila Ghailani and Bart Vanhercke (co-managers), Angelina Atanasova.

3.6 ACADEMIC SUPPORT TO THE PREPARATION OF THE BELGIAN EU COUNCIL PRESIDENCY 2024 (2022-2024)

The Centre for Social Policy Herman Deleeck (CSB, University of Antwerp) and the OSE have secured a contract with the Belgian Federal Public Service Social Security (*SPF Sécurité sociale*) 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 has been 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 will be discussed in dedicated workshops during spring

12. The European Social Observatory (BE), European Public Services Union (EU); Fondazione Giuseppe di Vittorio (IT); Scuola Universitaria superior Pisa (IT); Aalborg University (DK); Secafi – Groupe Alpha (FR); Institut Arbeit und Technik (DE); Institute of Public Affairs (PL); IRES Emilia Romagna (IT); Fundación 1 ° de Mayo (ES); ÉTOSZ (HU); University of Turku (FI).

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.

OSE researchers involved: Angelina Atanasova, Sebastiano Sabato, Slavina Spasova.

3.7 SOCIAL POLICY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION: STATE OF PLAY 2023 (13)

The OSE was contracted by the European Trade Union Institute to conduct research which will result in the 24th edition of the ‘Bilan social’ (the short name of the book in French), which will be edited this year by Bart Vanhercke, Sebastiano Sabato and Slavina Spasova.

Chapter 1 by Sotiria Theodoropoulou provides an analysis of the emerging new rules for the EU’s economic governance. Chapter 2 by Tommaso Grossi and Laura Rayner analyses the socio-ecological dimensions of the proposed Green Deal Industrial Plan (GDIP). Chapter 3 by Laurent Vogel provides an analysis of the main areas of activity of European occupational health policy in the period 2018-2022. The newly adopted EU Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages – a milestone on the journey towards a more social Europe – is at the heart of Chapter 4 by Torsten Müller and Thorsten Schulten. The politics of minimum income protection in the EU are discussed in Chapter 5 by Viola Shahini, Angelo Vito Panaro and Matteo Jessoula. In Chapter 6, Timo Weishaupt and Christian Hinrichs outline how homelessness has evolved in the EU over the course of the last three decades. Written by Bart Vanhercke, Sebastiano Sabato and Slavina Spasova, the Conclusions summarise the book’s key findings and briefly discuss recent developments such as the fate of the Platform Work Directive. The Chronology by Korina Kominou and Gudsiyya Allahverdiyeva summarises the key events in the EU’s social, ecological and economic affairs during 2022, beginning with France inaugurating its Presidency of the Council of the EU on 1 January 2022 and ending with the Council agreement on a temporary mechanism to limit excessive gas prices in December.

OSE researchers involved: Bart Vanhercke (lead researcher), Angelina Atanasova, Korina Kominou, Sebastiano Sabato, Slavina Spasova.

3.8 INTERNATIONAL DIGEST (Belgian Review for Social Security) (2019-2023)

The OSE was awarded a contract with the Belgian Federal Public Service Social Security in 2019 with a view to writing the ‘European and International Digest’ for the quarterly *Revue Belge de Sécurité Sociale* (RBSS/BTSZ). The Digest will continue to provide a regular overview of international developments (EU, OECD, ILO etc.) that have a direct or indirect

13. Download [here](#)

impact on social protection and social inclusion policies and debates. As of 2019, this Digest includes information on environmental decisions taken by these institutions with a direct impact on public health and welfare. The goal is to emphasise the increasingly close link between the environment (water quality, air quality, soil quality, etc.) and our daily lives. As of 2021, the Digest has further expanded to include highly discussed topics closely related to the state of social policy, such as equality and non-discrimination, as well as those aspects of democracy backsliding which impact social policy. These new topics point to the need to include a wider group of elements in a new, broader understanding of the concept of ‘social protection’. The RBSS/BTSZ is available online, in French and Dutch.

OSE researchers involved: Angelina Atanasova (lead researcher), Denis Bouget, Bart Vanhercke, Boris Fronteddu and Korina Kominou.

3.9 MONITORING QUALITY OF TRADE UNION INVOLVEMENT IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RRPS (2022-2023)

The ETUI asked the OSE, following a competitive tender, to investigate the quality of trade union involvement in the implementation of the national Recovery and Resilience plans. In order to do so, the OSE, first, elaborated an analytical framework suitable for identifying and investigating the main features of the involvement process. Second, empirical analysis was conducted on seven EU Member States: Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Slovakia and Spain. Finally, an empirically grounded analytical framework and a survey tool (questionnaire) for regular assessment of the quality of trade union consultation and involvement have been elaborated. This research has resulted in a report and a policy brief for ETUI (to be published in 2023).

OSE researchers involved: Angelina Atanasova, Sebastiano Sabato (lead researcher), Slavina Spasova, and Bart Vanhercke.

3.10 STUDY SUPPORTING THE MONITORING OF CARE CREDITS IN OCCUPATIONAL PENSION SCHEMES (2022 -2024)

OSE participated in a project with Risk & Policy Analysts Ltd. and its partners – Scuola Superiore di Studi Universitari e di Perfezionamento Sant’Anna and Mercer which delivered a ‘Study supporting the monitoring of care credits in occupational pension schemes and evaluating the situation of EU mobile workers’ (to be published in 2024), commissioned by the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL). The project objective is to contribute to the evaluation of 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.

OSE researchers involved: Slavina Spasova (lead researcher) and Korina Kominou.

3.11 ORIGAMI - hOme caRe dIGital platforMs and Industrial RELATIONS (2022-2024)

OSE has become a partner in the Origmai project led by Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (UCSC). It includes seven other academic and stockholder partners and is funded by DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion through the budget line "Improving expertise in the field of industrial relations – SOCPL-2022-IND-REL-01"

This project analyses the role of digital platforms in the ongoing transformation of the home care sector, identifying the specificities of their organizational model with respect to both traditional organizations in the sector and platforms present in other sectors, the consequences on working conditions, the need for social protection and representation of interests, and the innovative strategies of social actors to respond to these needs. The research is carried out in Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain through the following methodologies: the comparative analysis of the role, funding strategies and organization patterns of home care within each welfare systems; the mapping and the case studies of home care platforms and of innovative strategies for collective action.

OSE researchers involved: Slavina Spasova (lead researcher) and Korina Kominou.

3.12 PROVIDING SUPPORT TO A MUTUAL LEARNING EVENT ON TRANSPARENT ACCESS TO SOCIAL PROTECTION (2023)

The OSE was invited to write a thematic paper for and present it at a mutual learning workshop with Member States and stakeholders on access to social protection for workers and self-employed: focus on transparency organized by the European Commission. The discussion paper focuses on transparency provisions for workers and self-employed in social protection systems.

OSE researchers involved: Slavina Spasova (lead researcher) in collaboration with a previous OSE's intern Federico Moja (University of Milan).

3.13 ACCESS TO SOCIAL PROTECTION – PROJECT PROVIDING EXPERTISE TO THE BELGIAN PRESIDENCY – ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRES WITH THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL INSURANCE PLATFORM MEMBERS (ESIP) (DECEMBER 2023- APRIL 2024)

OSE was a partner together with the Vrij Universiteit van Brussel (VUB) in a project led by KULeuven providing an analysis requested in the framework of the Belgian Presidency to the *SPF Sécurité sociale*. 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 the application of 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.

OSE researchers involved: Slavina Spasova (lead researcher) in collaboration with previous OSE intern Federico Moja (University of Milan).

4. PREPARING OSE'S BIG MOVE TO MODERN PREMISES

The year 2023 was a pivotal moment for the OSE. The historic premises on the rue Paul-Emile Janson, where our association had been based since 1984, were sold and we had to look for a new location. At the beginning of 2023, a Task force 'OSE Moving' was set up, led by Renaud Smoes and comprising the following members of the administrative and research team: Benoît Malice, Rita Tomioka, Korina Kominou, Slavina Spasova, Jessica Martini, Angelina Atanasova and Bart Vanhercke.

Based on a survey of the team's preferences and needs, the Task Force established a set of criteria to guide the search for our new office. These included consideration of market rates for professional rents, local and regional taxes and utilities. Finding modern premises that were spacious and well served by public transport proved to be a challenge.

To facilitate the search, we worked with a bulk of real estate agents, spent several days in meetings, and months selecting and visiting various offices throughout Brussels. Benoît Malice and Rita Tomioka took measurements and assessed the condition of each property. Thanks to Rita's expertise in interior design, several scenarios were developed and presented to the team. Group visits were organised to show the shortlisted offices to the entire OSE team. We also consulted with OSE's historic partners to explore subletting and leasing opportunities.

At the same time, we undertook a thorough inventory of OSE's movable and intellectual assets - including a 5,000-volume library, journals, publication stocks, intellectual, financial and administrative archives, IT equipment and various other items - accumulated over 39 years on five floors (including attics) of the building. We arranged for donations of books and office furniture that could not be moved to the new office to non-profit organisations or private individuals. From an administrative point of view, we had to identify and conclude contracts with various service providers (insurance, office and window cleaning, various

supplies), negotiate the terms of vacating the premises with the new owners of the building on rue Paul-Emile Janson, and inventory all the equipment. We obtained quotes from several moving companies, organised the move with the best quality/price one and managed the dismantling, handling, packing and removal of bulky items.

After months of intensive searching, in November 2023 we chose an office in the Nordic House, a modern building in the heart of the European district on rue Luxembourg near the European Parliament and the 'Parc Royal'.

This was an intense but rewarding process for all of us – a great team effort that brought us closer and led to a beautiful and cozy workplace. The story of the move itself will continue in the 2024 Activity Report.

5.THE PLACES TO BE: OSE EVENTS IN SHORT

This section describes the events that were (co-)organised by the OSE throughout 2023: 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 section 6 ('Up close and personal').

26/01/2023 – Final Conference in Brussels of the WORKYP project, Working, Yet Poor

Keynote speakers: Nicolas Schmit, Olivier De Schutter, Özlem Demirel, Alva Finn, Anna Kwiatkiewicz, Oliver Röpke, Ludovic Voet, Dalila Ghailani

31/01/2023 – Social policy in the European Union: state of play 2022

OSE/ETUI Conference

Keynote speakers: David Bokhorst, Marco Cilento, Mary Collins, Amandine Crespy, Linda McAvan, Philippe Pochet, Luca Rossi, Frank Siebern Thomas, Sotiria Theodoropoulou, Sebastiano Sabato, Slavina Spasova and Bart Vanhercke

27/02/2023 – European Welfare States in Crisis? Labour markets in flux? - OSE/WeLaR project (Webinar)

Keynote speakers: Karolien Lenaerts, Bart Vanhercke, Aída Ponce del Castillo, Zuzanna Kowalik, Agnieszka Chłoń-Domińczak, Ursula Holtgrewe, Barbara Glinsner

25/04/2023 – The impact of digitalisation on job quality and social dialogue in public services in Poland and the European Union

OSE/Institute of Public Affairs (IPA)/Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (Roundtable discussion)

Keynote speakers: Dalila Ghailani, Salvo Leonardi, Richard Pond, Maciej Pankow, Adrian Zandberg, Marek Boiński, Beata Wójcik, Robert Lisicki

05/06/2023 – It takes two to tango. A policy debate for a just, green transition for the EU

OSE/Belgian Federal Public Service (FPS) Social Security (Seminar)

Keynote speakers: Sebastiano Sabato, Milena Büchs, Josefine Vanhille, Pascale Vielle, Amandine Crespy, Bart Vanhercke, Nicoletta Merlo, Anne Van Lancker

25/09/2023 – The impact of digitalisation on job quality and social dialogue in public services across the EU. DIGIQU@LPUB final conference in Brussels

Keynote speakers: Ramón Peña-Casas, Dalila Ghailani, Eckhard Voss, Aida Ponce Del Castillo, Valeria Pulignano, Ricardo Contreras, Jan-Willem Goudriaan

6. UP-CLOSE AND PERSONAL: TEAM MEMBER ACTIVITIES

OSE researchers participated in 30 events, as speakers, panellists, or moderators, during 2023.

16/01/2023 – ‘Study supporting the monitoring of care credits in occupational pension schemes and evaluating the situation of EU mobile workers’

Slavina Spasova participated in the first focus group with EU-level stakeholders.

17/01/2023 – Workshop ‘Crisis Resilience: The Role of Minimum Income Support and Upstream Systems’

Slavina Spasova gave a presentation on 'Social protection for non-standard workers and the self-employed. Lessons from the Covid-19 pandemic' at the workshop organised by the Institute for the Study of Labour (IZA) and the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS).

26/01/2023 – Working, Yet Poor Final Conference – Brussels

Dalila Ghailani presented the policy proposals at the EU level to tackle in-work poverty in line with the EPSR's principles at the final conference.

31/01/2023 – Book launch ‘Social policy in the European Union: state of play 2022’ – Brussels

Bart Vanhercke, Sebastiano Sabato and Slavina Spasova were organisers and speakers at the book launch ‘Social policy in the European Union: state of play 2022’.

10/02/2023 – European Social Policy Analysis Meeting (ESPAN) - Brussels

Slavina Spasova gave four presentations on different topics (ESPAN transparency report, various guidelines for future reports) at the ESPAN network meeting.

27/02/2023 – Research workshop on Improving Access to Social Protection in the EU Belgian Presidency EU2024 – Brussels

Slavina Spasova gave a presentation on the report ‘Improving Access to Social Protection in the European Union: a proposal for further action’, a paper providing expertise to the future Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

28/02/2023 – Center for Policy Studies panel

Slavina Spasova was a speaker in the panel ‘Shock after shock: are social policies delivering?’ organized by the Center for policy studies – CEPS IdeasLab days, where she gave a speech on ‘The role of social protection systems in the EU in cushioning the impact of the Covid-19 and energy crises’.

03/06/2023 – Working Group on “access to health care”

In 2023, Jessica was involved in the sub-group led by NIHDI focusing on the issue of access to health care. She participated in a series of four meetings organized between March and July 2023 to provide feedback and supervise the studies conducted on affordable access to

health care (coordinated by Jessica) and on the health care workforce (coordinated by the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policy). Both studies were intended to inform the health agenda of the Belgian presidency of the European Union. Brussels and online.

3-4/03/2023 – Presentation of the ESPAN Synthesis report on Transparency - Brussels

Slavina Spasova was a speaker during the presentation of the report, prepared by the ESPAN network, at the Social Protection Committee of the European Union (SPC - EU).

13/03/2023 – Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL) roundtable and workshop

Slavina Spasova was a speaker at the CEPAL-sponsored event on 'Opportunities to move towards universal social protection systems in Latin America and the Caribbean: the role of interregional dialogue'. She gave a presentation on 'Social protection and social inclusion policies during the COVID-19 pandemic' (online).

15/03/2023 – Workshop ‘The political economy of the green transition. Between eco-social policies and sustainable welfare state’

Sebastiano Sabato was a keynote speaker on 'The EU and the just transition: which welfare state for the socio-ecological transition?' in the online workshop organised by the Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Foundation.

20/03/2023 – Preparatory meeting for the Tallin 2023 Health System Conference - Brussels

Jessica Martini participated in a meeting for non-state actors organised in Brussels by the World Health Organisation regional office for Europe regarding preparations for the high-level conference on “Health systems in an era of crisis and opportunity” to be held in Tallin, Estonia, in December 2023. Participants were expected to provide feedback on the scope, content, specific areas of focus and framing of the planned conference.

24/04/2023 – DIGIQU@LPUB National workshop – Warsaw

Ramón Peña-Casas and Dalila Ghailani presented the main findings concerning the impact of digitalisation on job quality in the electricity, hospital and public administrations sectors at the Warsaw national meeting.

26/04/2023 – Seminar ‘Strengthening the European Pillar of Social Rights through social monitoring and improved access to social protection’ – Brussels

Slavina Spasova presented the paper 'Improving access to social protection in the European Union: a proposal for further action' at the seminar organised to provide expertise to the future Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

15/05/2023 – Beyond Growth 2023 Conference - Brussels

Sebastiano Sabato was a discussant in the Focus Panel 5 'From the welfare state to the social ecological state: how to organise and finance welfare without growth' in the event hosted by the European Parliament (Brussels).

22/05/2023 – Workshop on atypical work

Slavina Spasova was a discussant on 'Unemployment insurance for self-employed and platform workers: a conceptual, comparative and European perspective' at the workshop of the Working Group of the European Institute of Social Security (EISS), Antwerp.

24/05/2023 – EU Study Tour and Internship Program (EUSTIP) – Brussels

Sebastiano Sabato held a seminar on 'EU social policy: a just transition, low-wage sectors, and the role of basic income' for the event proposed by the University of Victoria.

25-26/05/2023 – Mutual Information System on Social Protection Network Meeting 2023 - Göteborg

Slavina Spasova gave a speech on Transparency of social protection systems during the event hosted by the MISSOC network.

05/06/2023 – Seminar ‘It Takes Two to Tango. A Policy Debate for a Just, Green Transition for the EU’ – Brussels

Sebastiano Sabato was a Keynote speaker at the seminar discussing ‘A just transition towards climate neutrality for the EU: debates, key issues and ways forward’, co-organized by the Belgian Public Service – Social Security and OSE.

13/06/2023 – Seminar ‘Social protection as facilitator of the green transition – do we need a European Eco-Social Model 2.0?’ – Brussels

Sebastiano Sabato was a speaker at the seminar organized by the European Trade Union Institute discussing ‘How to strengthen the EU framework for a just transition? Some areas for action’.

15/06/2023 – Study supporting the monitoring of care credits in occupational pension schemes and evaluating the situation of EU mobile workers

Slavina Spasova participated in the second focus group with EU level stakeholders for the study supporting the monitoring of care credits in occupational pension schemes’.

15/06/2023 – European Social Policy Analysis Meeting (ESPAN) - Brussels

Slavina Spasova gave a presentation on the report ‘Overview of the measures to tackle energy poverty and rising energy prices in the 27 Member States (July 2022 - February 2023). European Social Policy Analysis Network, Brussels: European Commission’. Unpublished

19/06/2023 – Seminar ‘Shaping the future of EU governance: Towards a just transition’

Sebastiano Sabato gave a speech on ‘The EU and the just transition: elements for a policy and research agenda’ in the seminar organized by the ZOE Institute for future-fit economies. This seminar was part of the series ‘Social Policy Unpacked’.

22/06/2023 – Bertelsmann Foundation Fellowship Workshop

Slavina Spasova gave a speech related to Social Protection and Social Inclusion Measures during the COVID-19 Pandemic in the workshop organised by the Bertelsmann Foundation Fellowship (online).

26/06/2023 – Roundtable on sustainability, climate crisis and the green transition - Online

Jessica Martini participated in the roundtable organised online by the Sustainable Welfare & Eco-Social Policy Network to discuss challenges and opportunities for European health care systems that arise from the climate crisis and the green transition. Participants were invited not only to address challenges and opportunities, but also to share examples of best/worst practices or policy related to green health care, and to provide policy recommendations to build and improve climate-proof health care systems in Europe.

26/06/2023 – Bertelsmann Foundation Fellowship programme – Brussels

Jessica Martini and Bart Vanhercke made a presentation on how the European Union influence health care systems of Member States to the fellows of the 2023 Bertelsmann Foundation Fellowship programme. This year, the programme was focused on the future of work and brought together 11 fellows from Europe and the United States with an expertise in various fields, from migration to digital policy.

27/06/2023 – 29th International Conference of Europeanists – Reykjavik

Sebastiano Sabato participated in the academic conference and presented the paper 'Unbalanced just transition? The EU Recovery and Resilience Facility and the evolution of eco-social policies in Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain', written with Sotiria Theodoropoulou and Mehtap Akgüç.

5-6/09/2023 – Lectures at KU Leuven - Leuven

Slavina Spasova gave two lectures on European Union social integration during the Executive Summer School of Social Security.

18/09/2023 – Reference group meeting for the 2024 Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU – Brussels

Jessica Martini presented the main findings and conclusion of the study conducted with other OSE and external colleagues on the way the European Union can support Member States to further ensure affordable access to health care. The international reference group brought together officials from Member States, the European Parliament, the European Commission, as well as representatives from WHO, OECD and academia. It was especially convened by the Belgian Presidency to work as a sounding board and provide feedback on the different studies conducted on health to inform the work of the Belgian Presidency on this sector.

25/09/2023 – DIGIQU@LPUB final conference – Brussels

Dalila Ghailani presented the main findings concerning the impacts of digitalisation on the job quality of workers in the electricity and hospital sectors.

Ramón Peña-Casas presented the main findings concerning the impacts of digitalisation on the job quality of workers in public administrations.

12/10/2023 – European Social Insurance Platform (ESIP) flagship conference

Slavina Spasova was a panelist at the event presenting the draft proposal 'Europe's social security systems and the changing world of work'.

13/10/2023 – Workshop on long-term care – Online

Jessica Martini and Slavina Spasova participated in the online workshop for social partners and experts organized by RAND Europe and EY with the aim to get feedback on the feasibility study they conducted for the European Commission regarding the attraction in Europe of long-term care workers from non-EU countries (online).

16-17/10/2023 – Mutual learning workshop on access to social protection - Brussels

Slavina Spasova presented the report on 'access to social protection for workers and self-employed: a focus on transparency'.

24/11/2023 – WeLaR workshop – Leuven

As part of the activities of the WeLaR project, Ramón Peña-Casas made a speech on ‘Policies aiming to tackle in-work poverty in Europe’ during this workshop dedicated to labour market supply: What policies to encourage labour market participation and ensure that no one is left behind?

09/11/2023 – Lecture at the Université Catholique de Louvain – Louvain-la-Neuve

Jessica Martini gave a lecture on the way the European Union influences the health care systems of member States to Master students attending the course on the European social model and employment at the Université Catholique de Louvain.

13/11/2023 – High-level event on social protection for the self-employed – Madrid

Slavina Spasova gave a speech at the high-level event on social protection for the self-employed organized by the Spanish presidency of the EU, Madrid, Spain.

23/11/2023 – Lecture at Université Catholique de Louvain (UCL) - Louvain la Neuve

Slavina Spasova gave a lecture on the renewal of the European Union social dimension in the last decade, in the framework of B. Vanhercke’s course ‘*Europe sociale*’.

01/12/2023 – Expert seminar at Eurofound

Slavina Spasova took part in the discussion on the future Eurofound report on unemployment benefits and minimum income (online).

12/12/2023 – Conference ‘Strengthening the social dimension of the European Green Deal’ - Brussels

Sebastiano Sabato gave a speech on ‘How can the EPSR contribute to a more comprehensive social dimension of the EGD?’ as part of the conference organized by the European Trade Union Institute, Brussels.

7. OUTPUT DATA: THE OSE'S REACH

7.1 PUBLICATIONS

As illustrated in Table 1, the OSE team produced 18 publications in 2023. The details of the OSE publications are given in Section 7 below.

Table 1. Type and number of OSE publications in 2022

| <i>Type of publication</i> | <i>Number</i> |
|----------------------------|---------------|
| Articles | 3 |
| Papers | 5 |
| Reports | 2 |
| Book chapters | 4 |
| Digests and opinions | 4 |
| Edited volumes/books | 0 |
| Total | 18 |

Publications by OSE researchers have been cited over 11,718 times in total. In 2023, OSE researchers were cited 1,514 times in scholarly literature, across an array of publishing formats and disciplines (Source: Google Scholar). Google Scholar harvests publications of all types across the internet, giving students and researchers easy access to the OSE's work through the familiar format of Google. However, it should be noted that Google Scholar is largely limited to English language publications, while some OSE publications are in French and (occasionally) in Dutch. Not all OSE researchers have a profile on Google Scholar.

7.2 THE MILLION DOLLAR QUESTION: 'IMPACT'

The number of publications or citations obviously obscures the fact that some OSE publications, irrespective of whether they are quoted, may be actively used as background material (e.g. for stakeholders and policymakers) and as food for thought for internal discussions (e.g. in European institutions), while other reports (typically deliverables written for the European institutions) are cited without the author's names, but rather as 'European Commission' or 'European Economic and Social Committee'.

The following examples provide some insights into the impact of OSE publications and activities.

- In 2023, **the WorkYP project** ('Working, Yet Poor') comes to its term and the OSE submitted its deliverables, Ramón and Dalila took part in the project meetings, reviewed several deliverables and co-authored two transversal WorkYP policy briefing papers (co-authored by Ramón Peña-Casas, Dalila Ghailani and Korina Kominou). The first is dedicated to the findings of the project and propose EU-level recommendations to EU stakeholders to tackle in-work poverty among vulnerable groups of workers, while the second is dedicated to policy proposals aimed at enhancing the social content of the EU social citizenship. Several academic publications were generated by the project ⁽¹⁴⁾. Among these, a book chapter on 'Policy Proposals at EU level to better address in-work poverty while implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights' was elaborated by the OSE researchers involved in the project.
- The final conference of the **DIGIQU@LPUB project** ('Impact of digitalisation on job quality and social dialogue in the public services') was held in Brussels the 25 of September 2023, and brought together 47 participants onsite and 82 participants online. The aim of the project was twofold. On the one hand, to assess, on the basis of a web survey and focus groups of public service workers, the impact of digitalisation on various aspects of the quality of employment of these workers (organisation and content of tasks, working conditions, working time and reconciliation of personal and professional life, physical and mental health, prospects for progression and job security, workers' rights). Secondly, to assess the extent to which the digitalisation of work and its consequences have been taken into account in the national social dialogues of the eight countries included in the project. The project gives rise to a significant number of research deliverables and publications, including a database of the detailed web survey collecting the answers of 7,621 public services workers across the eight countries. An important share of them were revamped and published in the OSE Working Papers Series: the final scientific reports, the Briefing Papers on the impacts of digitalisation on job quality and the integration of the issue in national social dialogues (also available in French and German) and the eight country studies (including translation of the executive summary in each of the national languages). These numerous multilingual outputs are used or usable by the project's national partners, but also by EPSU and the many national trade unions that are part of it.
- Project **INAMI**: The OSE actively participated in meetings with various federal government agencies involved in the preparation of the health workstream for the Belgian Presidency in 2024. As mentioned above, OSE researchers participated in the working group on "access to health care" bringing together representatives from the

14. For a full overview of these publications see the CORDIS website at <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/870619/results/en>

Belgian federal and mutualistic level. In this framework, they conducted and coordinated a study on affordable access to health care. Its findings were presented in September 2023 to the international reference group convened by the Belgian Presidency to comment on the preparatory work regarding health issues, which was made up of officials from Member States, the European Parliament, the European Commission, as well as representatives from WHO, OECD and academia. The findings were also synthesized in a special issue of the journal *EuroHealth*, which was expected to support debates on health issues all along the Belgian Presidency. Additionally, for the health sector, the OSE fed into the process initiated by the Belgian health ministry and NIHDI in view of setting health(care) targets and a multiannual health care budgetary trajectory by carrying out a comparative case study on the way health and health care targets are defined at international level and what lessons can be learned for Belgium.

- The OSE provided key input in Volume I of the 2024 Pension Adequacy Report (PAR), the fourth edition of the report prepared every three years by the SPC and the European Commission. Similar contributions were provided by the ESPN for the previous PARs, in 2021, 2018, 2015, PARs. The OSE also supported the July 2018 PAR launch conference, which Bart Vanhercke chaired. In July 2021, Slavina Spasova acted as a chair and moderator of two breakout sessions.
- Within the project **Academic support to the preparation of the Belgian presidency 2024 of the Council of the European Union (2022-2024)** OSE researchers Angelina Atanasova, Sebastiano Sabato and Slavina Spasova presented their views at several seminars organised by the Belgian Presidency, based on papers they had co-authored with researchers from different universities (see section 3). These discussions were intended to feed into the Belgian Presidency's reflections on disability (Angelina), just transition (Sebastiano) and access to social protection (Slavina).
 - As an example, the ESPN report on Transparency of access to social protection (written in 2022 and published in 2023) was used by Slavina Spasova for the report providing expertise to the Belgian Presidency on access to social protection. They highlighted the need to continue monitoring this issue through the OMC, as well as the need for a comprehensive initiative on this issue at EU level. This proposal was discussed at two seminars organised by the Belgian Presidency (in February and May), which were also attended by representatives of DG EMPL. Following these discussions, and in view of the future Belgian Presidency's intention to continue working on such an initiative, the EU Commission launched a mutual learning event (October 2023). Slavina Spasova wrote the thematic report that served as a background for this event and will act as one of the facilitators.

7.3 THE OSE WEBSITE: STRUCTURE AND VISITORS

The OSE website is available in English and French, and is structured as follows:

The welcome page highlights the latest news, events, publications, activities, and appearances in the media of the OSE.

The ‘Team’ page provides information (incl. recent publications) on most team members.

The ‘Events’ section displays upcoming events hosted by the OSE (and affiliates), giving details of the event’s content, date, location, and contact information, as well as various network activities. Information about past events is equally available through this page.

Many OSE publications can be accessed through the ‘[Publications](#)’ page, which provides a chronological list of published works by present and past OSE researchers, including the OSE Paper Series. Sorted by year, the prolific ‘Publications’ section displays the commitment shown by the OSE researchers to their subjects.

On the ‘[Projects](#)’ page, interested readers can find current and past projects in which the OSE team was involved, with links to key documents and partners in OSE research.

As illustrated Table 2, the total number of *visits* ranged between 556 and 1,544 per month in 2023 (Matomo Web Stat). In total, some 13,199 visitors reached out to our website (on average 1,100/month). These figures have been on a steady increase over the years.

The website, using Drupal Open Source content management system, was launched in 2022, and makes it easier to include multimedia content, and share/ manage content across devices (PC, tablet, smartphone). The OSE website is given a light update on a weekly basis and is fully updated at the time of every OSE Flash publication or new OSE event.

Table 2: Visits, unique page views and unique downloads from the OSE website in 2023

| <i>Month</i> | <i>Visits</i> | <i>Page views</i> | <i>Downloads</i> |
|--------------|---------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Jan 2023 | 1067 | 2238 | 141 |
| Feb 2023 | 878 | 1983 | 174 |
| Mar 2023 | 1113 | 2470 | 215 |
| Apr 2023 | 1121 | 2305 | 226 |
| May 2023 | 1200 | 2584 | 251 |
| Jun 2023 | 1133 | 2458 | 257 |
| Jul 2023 | 1172 | 2820 | 292 |
| Aug 2023 | 566 | 1323 | 143 |
| Sep 2023 | 1494 | 3266 | 586 |
| Oct 2023 | 1081 | 2242 | 177 |
| Nov 2023 | 830 | 2211 | 159 |
| Dec 2023 | 1544 | 2800 | 336 |
| Total | 13199 | 28700 | 2957 |

7.4 OSE PUBLICATIONS: DOWNLOADS

There have been 2957 downloads from the OSE website in 2023. This relatively low number can be explained by the fact that the *majority* of the OSE publications are hosted on the websites of the clients for whom the research is produced, or on websites of academic publishers ⁽¹⁵⁾. However, it should be noted that they almost doubled between 2022 and 2023. All ESPAN (previously ESPN reports) are hosted on the European Commission website, while the respective volumes of ‘Social policy in the EU’ (*Bilan social*) are hosted on the ETUI website (ETUI also provided free physical copies of the book to interested readers). In many cases, publications can also be downloaded directly from ResearchGate. In some cases, research output is published on the OSE website, as well as on the clients’ website (e.g. reports produced for INAMI/NIHDI). In other words: the figures provided in table 2 are certainly an important *underestimation* of the actual number of downloads of OSE publications.

7.5 OSE NEWSLETTERS

The OSE publishes two Newsletters - ‘OSE Flash News’ and ‘European Health Care News’.

The ‘OSE Flash News’, launched in 2009, informs about publications produced and events organised by the organisation as well as other matters such as nomination of associate researchers, members of the Board of Directors, etc.

‘European Health Care News’, launched in September 2007, is published on behalf of the National Institute for Health and Disability Insurance (NIHDI, Belgium) and is intended to alert on key developments recently emerged in EU policy and law that may have an impact on Belgian and other European health care systems. A wide range of areas are covered and currently structured into about 12 sections. Eight sections cover key areas of European Union competence: public health, internal market, social policy, economic policy, EU funding, competition, case law of the Court of Justice and infringement procedures. Two sections focus specifically on medicines and medical devices, and of e-health. The ‘miscellaneous’ section includes, more broadly, events with an impact on health care relating to areas of competence other than those already covered (e.g. environmental policy or human rights). Finally, the ‘publications’ section provides analyses on EU policies with an impact on health care. Besides providing a short description of the various developments, the newsletter also includes hyperlinks to official documents, allowing readers to get further details about them. The newsletter is published every three months in French, Dutch and English. It is sent by the NIHDI (RIZIV/INAMI) to the NIHDI’s General Council and Insurance Committee, which includes the key stakeholders of the Belgian national health insurance system. Additionally,

it is published on the NIHDI and OSE website and disseminated by NIHDI to the subscribers of its daily French and Dutch newsletter “alerte/alert” and by the OSE to its registered readership.

The ‘OSE Flash News’ had more than 1,300 subscribers while the European Health Care News had 986 subscribers (for the three languages all together) in 2023.

In full compliance with the GDPR rules, we work with an ‘opt-in registration system’ for both newsletters. This means that the newsletter and Flash News are only sent to people who decide to subscribe after they’ve received an invitation to do so by e-mail.

Table 4. OSE Newsletters: 2023 readership

| | Number of subscribers (opt-in) |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| OSE Flash News | 1322 |
| European Health Care News | 986 |

8.FOOD FOR THOUGHT: OSE’S REFERENCE LIST IN 2023

Atanasova, Angelina (2023), Narrowing the employment gap for people with disabilities The need for effective policy implementation, ETUI, Policy Brief, 2023.09.

Atanasova, Angelina (2023). Judicialization of politics at supranational level through judicial dialogue and bottom-up activism. The case of dispute resolution of gender equality and disability under the preliminary ruling procedure (Art. 267 TFEU). PhD Thesis. (Defended: 19 January 2023; unpublished).

Atanasova, Angelina (2023). Litigating fundamental rights violations before the courts in Europe: The role of civil society in Bulgaria. Re:Constitution Working Paper, Forum Transregionale Studien 18/2023, Berlin.

Atanasova, Angelina and Federico Moja (2023). ‘The European Union in 2021: key events’ in Bart Vanhercke, Sebastiano Sabato and Slavina Spasova (eds.), Social policy in the European Union: state of play 2022, Policymaking in a permacrisis. Brussels: ETUI and OSE, pp. 157-174.

Atanasova, Angelina and Zane Rasnača (2023). ‘The rule of law crisis and social policy: the EU response in the cases of Hungary and Poland’ in Bart Vanhercke, Sebastiano Sabato and Slavina Spasova (eds.), Social policy in the European Union: state of play 2022, Policymaking in a permacrisis. Brussels: ETUI and OSE, pp. 111-135.

Atanasova, Angelina, An-Sofie Leenknecht and Julie Vinck (2023). Advancing disability rights in the context of the 'Union of equality: Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030. Academic support for the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU 2024. (undisclosed).

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Peña-Casas R. et Ghailani D. (2023) Die Verbreitung der Digitalisierung und ihre ambivalenten Auswirkungen auf die Arbeitsplatzqualität von Beschäftigten im öffentlichen Sektor in der EU, DIGIQU@LPUB Policy Brief, OSE Working Paper Series, Briefing Paper Nr 19, September 2023, 19p.

Peña-Casas R. et Ghailani D. (2023) L'omniprésence de la digitalisation et ses impacts ambivalents sur la qualité de l'emploi des travailleurs des services publics dans l'UE, DIGIQU@LPUB Policy Brief, OSE Working Paper Series, Briefing Paper N° 18, septembre 2023, 18p.

Peña-Casas R. et Ghailani D. (2023) The ambivalent and ambiguous impacts of digitalisation on job quality of workers in public services in the European Union - The case of electricity production and supply, hospital, and public administration sectors, DIGIQU@LPUB paper, OSE Working Paper Series, Research Paper No. 61, September 2023, 156p.

Peña-Casas R. et Ghailani D. (2023) The ambivalent and ambiguous impacts of digitalisation on job quality of workers in public services in the European Union: the case of electricity production and supply, hospital, and public administration sectors - Statistical Annex, DIGIQU@LPUB paper, OSE Working Paper Series, Research Paper No. 62, September 2023, 77p.

Peña-Casas R. et Ghailani D. (2023) The pervasiveness of digitalisation and its ambivalent impacts on job quality of public services workers in the EU, DIGIQU@LPUB Policy Brief, OSE Working Paper Series, Briefing Paper No. 16, September 2023, 17p.

Ramón Peña-Casas, R., Ghailani, D. and K. Kominou (2023) Policy Proposals at EU level to Better Address In-work Poverty while Implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights, in Ratti L. and P. Schouckens (Eds), *Working, Yet Poor - Challenges to EU Social Citizenship*, Hart Publishing:Oxford .pp. 189-206.

Sabato, S. and Mandelli, M. (2023), Towards an EU framework for a just transition: welfare policies and politics for the socio-ecological transition, European Political Science, Symposium “Political science perspectives on the emerging ecosocial policies, politics and polity in the European Union”. Sabato, S., Büchs M. and Vanhille J. (2023) ‘A just transition towards climate neutrality for the EU: debates, key issues and ways forward’, Background paper commissioned by the Belgian Federal Public Service – Social Security, OSE Paper Series, Research Paper No. 52, Brussels: European Social Observatory.

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