

A satellite image of a hurricane, showing a clear eye and spiral cloud bands, serves as the background for the entire page. The image is in shades of blue and white, with the hurricane's center being the brightest point.

ecdpm

**ANNUAL
REPORT
2024**

In this report

04 From our Board Chair

05 From our Director

About us

06 Who we are and what we do

10 Our workstreams

A snapshot of our year

12 Highlights in 2024

16 Why international cooperation matters for European interests

18 Shaping the future of EU external financing

20 A comprehensive mapping of labour migration pathways

22 How the EU can work in fragile settings

24 The importance of protecting civic space

26 Supporting the Belgian EU presidency

28 Africa's journey to develop robust AI governance

30 Green industrialisation as a bridge between African and European goals

32 How partnerships can help scale investment in sustainable food systems

ECDPM in 2024

34 Outreach and impact

38 Finances

42 Our people

46 Governance

48 Our partners

50 Sustainability



24

From our Board Chair

Adebayo Olukoshi



The year 2024 marked a ‘super year’ of elections around the globe. Although the outcomes of some of these elections were anticipated, few were prepared for the actual shifts in national and global affairs that came about. The November 2024 elections in the United States were particularly significant. Donald Trump’s return as president brought a dramatic change in US domestic and foreign policy priorities. Combined with the already charged international geopolitical context, the rightward swing of the political pendulum in many European countries and persistent worries over the future of the multilateral system, there can be no doubt that we are undergoing a major reset in world affairs. Navigating this reset requires a fundamental rethinking of the core pillars underpinning the post-1945 world order.

Many thematic issues came to the fore or accelerated during the year. There was the continued retrenchment of traditional development cooperation, the spectre of a new debt crisis, impacts of global climate change and intra- and interstate conflicts – as well as their consequences in terms of flows of migrants and refugees. New preoccupations also emerged, such as concerns around artificial intelligence (AI) and resurgent authoritarianism. All of these issues have either been at the heart of ECDPM’s work or were already flagged as key spearpoints for the future. Thus, amidst increasingly worrisome times, ECDPM continued to demonstrate its ability to hone in on the developments that matter on the world stage and in relations between Africa and Europe.

ECDPM’s credibility as an independent and reliable actor in a period of rapid and unpredictable change in Africa, Europe and the rest of the world has made it an invaluable resource. Its contribution as an honest broker and leading source of balanced knowledge will be further strengthened by the appointment of San Bilal, a respected ECDPM veteran, as the new Centre director. San Bilal takes over from Carl Michiels, whose tenure as director significantly strengthened the Centre.

The years ahead will challenge the international system in multiple ways. Institutions like ECDPM will be called on to pursue their mission with the diligence and integrity they have become known for. At the same time, we must be agile and responsive, prepared to adapt our organisational structures to shifting realities, not least, the deep cuts in funding for work on development and governance. In the face of these challenges, and in close collaboration with the management team, the Supervisory Board will do its utmost to maintain ECDPM as a leading and credible actor in the field. With director San Bilal and a committed Centre staff, we are confident in our collective resilience and vision to navigate the stormy times ahead. In that endeavour, your continued support will remain invaluable.

Adebayo Olukoshi
Chair of the Supervisory Board

From our Director

San Bilal



The past year brought profound global transitions. With new leadership emerging in the European Union (EU) and Donald Trump’s re-election as president of the United States, we have witnessed a deepening of geopolitical fragmentation, polarisation and security tensions. At a time of growing global development needs, traditional cooperation models are being questioned – even retrenched. In this context, ECDPM has actively championed a forward-looking development agenda in international relations, adapting our narratives and operations to better align with shifting political and contextual realities.

We have also navigated a period of transition internally. We bid farewell to Carl Michiels, whom we sincerely thank for his dedication and invaluable contributions to reinforcing the Centre’s foundations during his leadership. I am honoured by the confidence shown by the Supervisory Board and my colleagues in selecting me as director through a competitive process. I embrace the responsibility of leading ECDPM through these complex times, working alongside ECDPM’s staff. It is their dynamism, innovative spirit and commitment to improve that drive our mission forward. The new projects and ideas emerging are a source of true inspiration, expanding our perspectives and sharpening our effectiveness.

Despite internal resource constraints, our level of activity has remained robust. We have intensified our efforts to bridge the development agenda and broader geostrategic and external relations

themes. Our work has meaningfully contributed to EU development priorities, from engagements under the Belgian presidency of the Council of the EU and the mid-term evaluation of the EU’s external financing instruments, to our analyses on the EU’s new leadership.

ECDPM has also advanced critical dialogues and partnerships on Africa’s integration, sustainable food systems (including through the G7), green industrialisation, clean energy, digitalisation, migration, peace and security, and local governance. We have paid close attention to dynamics in the Global South and China’s role on the world stage, particularly in Africa. In this era of intensifying geoeconomic rivalries, we have increasingly focused on the evolving investment landscape and the Global Gateway strategy, which place stronger emphasis on the EU’s self-interest, strategic autonomy and competitiveness, striving to ensure these efforts support mutually beneficial partnerships with countries in the Global South.

I thank our partners and supporters for their trust and collaboration, and welcome the Centre’s many new associates and fellows. As we look ahead, 2025 presents a range of new challenges. But these are challenges that we are fully committed to helping navigate with dedication and expertise.

San Bilal
Executive Director

Who we are and what we do



ECDPM is a leading independent ‘think and do tank’ that wants to make policies in Europe, Africa and beyond work for inclusive and sustainable development.

Good policies are extremely powerful. They can tackle society’s biggest problems at the root, lay a foundation for change and play a crucial part in making the global development agenda a reality for all. That is why we want to help institutions and governments in Europe, Africa and beyond create policies that work.

Our independent policy experts contribute sharp analysis, thorough research and fresh ideas. But making policies work requires stepping off the sidelines, too. It means working closely with the people who create, implement or are impacted by policies. We bring different groups around the table, smooth the way for debate and make

sure that everyone’s voice is heard. We provide advice and training, and design practical solutions together.

ECDPM has over thirty-five years of experience in international cooperation, development policy and Africa-Europe relations. Our focus areas include climate, energy and food, economy and trade, geopolitics and development, governance, migration and mobility, and peace and security.

Our partners include government ministries, regional institutions, international organisations, think tanks, academia, and social and economic actors from Africa, Europe and beyond.



What we offer



Research and analysis

We provide thorough policy research, sharp analysis and fresh ideas.



Advice, training and support

We offer practical policy advice, training and support.



Events

We organise and speak at debates, conferences and workshops.



Partnerships and dialogue

We connect people, broker partnerships and create space for dialogue.



Expert information

We provide background information to our partners and the media.

[About us]

What sets us apart

We are more than a think tank.

We are researchers and analysts, but we are also facilitators, advisors, evaluators and trainers. It's that combination of roles which sets us apart from other think tanks. To make policies work, we need solid knowledge of what works and what doesn't, but also to work with the people who are crucial in implementing those policies.

We are independent.

Our unique funding situation allows us to maintain operational autonomy and set our own, non-partisan agenda.

We look beyond promises.

Whether policy change is good, bad or absent usually depends on a number of factors and people. That is why we look beyond policy statements and analyse what drives or prevents change. That means looking at all political constraints and incentives.

We know the African and European policy landscape inside and out.

Africa-Europe relations is our main focus. For over thirty-five years we have worked with institutions, governments and partners across Africa and Europe. That has resulted in a broad network, a solid institutional memory of what has and hasn't worked before, and a knack for foreseeing how policy arenas will evolve.

We are in it for the long run.

Making policies work cannot happen overnight. We engage in policy processes from beginning to end and commit to long-term relationships with our partners, to jointly accomplish changes over time.

Our work-streams

Europe and Africa in the world

EU foreign and development policy

The EU is dealing with a number of challenges close to home, while at the same time seeking to play a more significant global role. Our EU foreign and development policy team explores the EU's approach to external action in a turbulent geopolitical landscape and wants to contribute to a more coherent and integrated EU foreign and development policy.

Migration and mobility

Migration and mobility stimulate development as drivers of social and economic change, but they can also pose significant challenges. Our migration and mobility team wants to help maximise the development potential of migration and mobility while minimising risks. We work to promote effective and human-centred migration governance in Europe and Africa, and aim to contribute to improved Africa-Europe cooperation on migration.

AU-EU relations

The African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU) have committed to building a different kind of partnership and moving beyond traditional North-South cooperation, but more so on paper than in practice. Our AU-EU relations team explores how both parties can create a mutually beneficial and interest-driven partnership.

Digital economy and governance

International cooperation on digital technologies and AI is vital for sustainable development, for safeguarding free and open societies, and for protecting fundamental human rights. Our digital economy and governance team wants to support more effective EU external action on digital technologies and AI, and explore how digital integration can advance Africa's development agenda.

Peaceful societies and accountable governance

Inclusive governance and accountability

Democratic governance and accountable institutions are essential to ensure inclusive and sustainable development and respect for human rights. Our inclusive governance and accountability team wants to contribute to a context-specific and politically informed understanding of the drivers of governance and accountability.

Peace, security and resilience

Recent years have witnessed a deadly pandemic, the rise of (geo)political instability, new conflicts and the undeniable effects of the climate crisis in much of the world. Our peace, security and resilience team promotes the transition of fragile and conflict-affected countries towards peaceful, well-governed and prosperous societies, and encourages a strategic peace and security partnership between Africa and Europe.

Sustainable African economies and climate action

Economic recovery and transformation

Economic growth, poverty reduction and sustainable development have suffered major setbacks due to the lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the impact of Russia's war in Ukraine and deepening global fragmentation. Our economic recovery and transformation team wants to contribute to effective European and African policies and instruments for sustainable, inclusive economic recovery and transformation.

African economic integration

Africa's continental free trade area aims to create a single market of goods and services on a continent of 1.5 billion people. Yet, achieving the goal of an integrated and prosperous Africa will be no easy task for policymakers. Our African economic integration team wants to bring the dynamics around regional integration into better focus and understand how policies can adapt to who or what is driving or blocking progress.

Climate action and green transition

The next few years will – and must – bring major changes in global climate action. Our climate action and green transition team aims to contribute to ambitious, fair and effective responses to the climate crisis and explore the European and African politics of green transition, industrialisation and renewable energy deployment.

Sustainable food systems

Global food systems struggle to provide the growing population with affordable and healthy foods. They also create livelihood stresses and damage our natural environment. Our sustainable food systems team wants to support transitions to sustainable, resilient, equitable and inclusive food systems.

[A snapshot of our year]

Highlights in 2024

These pages present our most memorable highlights from 2024, grouped by key topics that capture the essence of our work – both within the individual workstreams and through cross-workstream efforts. Pages 16 to 33 then zoom in on nine flagship projects.

EU international cooperation

- Our [analysis](#) of Europe's changing international cooperation agenda, drawing from off-the-record interviews with senior European officials, became our most-read work of 2024 and led to several event invitations.
- Ahead of the EU elections, we launched a [series of commentaries and videos](#) exploring the implications of new appointments and power shifts for the EU's global partners. *See also page 16*
- We [mapped perceptions of EU and Chinese support to the green agendas](#) of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Morocco and South Africa, [discussed](#) the findings with African, Chinese and European representatives, and argued for [a stronger EU offer](#) rather than just more competition with China. The work was featured in the '[China in Africa](#)' and '[AFRIKCHINE](#)' podcasts.
- We supported the Belgian presidency of the Council of the EU during the first half of 2024, sharing our insights on the AU-EU health partnership, development finance, food systems, the Global Gateway strategy, and peace and security at high-level events and with various Council working parties. *See also page 26*
- With the Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, we organised a seminar on the Global Gateway strategy in Vienna for representatives of various government ministries and specialised agencies.
- We broke down the findings of the [mid-term evaluation of the EU's external financing instruments](#), which we undertook with Particip, in a [widely read commentary](#). Our contributions influenced policy debates on the instruments, with the [European Commission](#) and the [Council of the EU](#) drawing on our insights. *See also page 18*
- Building on [years of analysis of the EU's long-term budget](#) – the multiannual financial framework (MFF) – we published a [paper on the 2028-2034 MFE](#) ahead of the 2025 negotiations.



Development finance

- Building on our work for the Belgian EU presidency, we assessed the [European financial architecture for development](#), offering concrete recommendations for its future in a changing global context.
- Drawing from our work on [private capital](#), [local currency financing](#) and [concessional finance](#), we organised an [event](#) on European climate and development finance, attended by European financiers and representatives of EU institutions and member states.
- We helped shape and moderated a high-level event in Brussels on coordination between export credit agencies and development finance institutions within the Global Gateway strategy, organised by the European Commission's directorates-general for international partnerships (DG INTPA) and trade (DG Trade).

AI and technology

- We presented our [work on financing inclusive digital transformation under the Global Gateway strategy](#) at the Digital for Development (D4D) Exchange Days, attended by officials from EU member states and their development agencies, development banks and the European Commission.
- We were invited to participate in a meeting of the D4D Hub AI Working Group in Brussels, as well as in the OECD-AU AI Dialogue in Paris, following our [brief on AI governance in Africa](#). *See also page 28*
- We published a widely read report on [cross-border data flows in Africa](#) – also available in [French](#) and [Portuguese](#) – and a popular [interactive tool](#) mapping digital policies in Africa, both of which drew highly positive feedback. *See also page 28*
- We hosted a workshop on EU and global approaches to digital public infrastructure, and later published a paper on [tech sovereignty](#) and a new [EU foreign economic policy](#).



Food systems

- With the Italian G7 presidency and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), we organised and moderated a [discussion](#) on the role IFAD could play in advancing the G7 Apulia Food Systems Initiative. *See also page 32*
- Building on our [paper](#) on the topic, we moderated a national dialogue in Nairobi on implementing the global roadmap for achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 on 'zero hunger' while staying within the 1.5°C global warming limit. The event was organised by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).
- With IFAD and partners, we held a [side event](#) at the Committee on World Food Security's 52nd plenary session on enhancing financial support for sustainable food systems. We also moderated a [roundtable](#) organised by FAO at the World Food Forum on investment opportunities in the coffee value chain, as part of the Hand-in-Hand Initiative and the G7 public-private initiative on coffee. *See also page 32*



Climate

- With AUDA-NEPAD, we organised a [high-level side event at COP29](#) in Baku on integrating climate action into African food systems, marking the launch of an Italian-backed AUDA-NEPAD-ECDPM initiative to align climate and food system policies and investment across African trade corridors.
- With the Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA) and the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), we organised a [COP29 debrief](#) on adaptation finance and diplomacy in Africa-Europe relations, informing our [2025 brief on European support for climate adaptation](#).





Green industrialisation

- We published a widely read interactive guide on green hydrogen for exports and industry, later expanding it with a study on green fertiliser production to drive industrialisation and agricultural growth in Africa. We also explored how North Africa and Europe could benefit from a partnership in green steel. *See also page 30*
- Examining Indonesia and Chile, we explored narratives around resource nationalism, drawing lessons for African countries and Europe. We later hosted a webinar on multilateralism and the role of bilateral partnerships in governing critical raw materials. *See also page 30*

Trade and African integration

- We analysed the impact of the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) on developing economies, suggesting four response strategies for African and other partner countries. *See also page 30*
- We contributed chapters to an e-book on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), following work on private sector engagement in the AfCFTA with the Policy Center for the New South (PCNS), which was part of the 'Africa-Europe relations: A balanced narrative and reality check' project. We also explored relations between the AfCFTA and regional bodies.
- We hosted representatives of African regional economic communities, the AU and service associations in Brussels to discuss how to link Africa's trade and movement policies, sharing challenges, successes and insights from the EU's experience. We published a summary of key takeaways.



Migration and mobility

- We spoke at the second Regional Review of the Global Compact for Migration in Addis Ababa, which gathered input to shape the 2026 International Migration Review Forum's agenda. We later outlined actions African countries can take to improve labour mobility.
- We created a first-of-its-kind mapping of labour migration pathways across all 27 EU member states as part of a study with the Migration Partnership Facility (MPF), which is implemented by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) and funded by the European Commission. *See also page 20*
- As part of the EU-funded DYNAMIG project on migration decision-making, we spoke at a policy workshop in Nairobi, hosted by the African Migration and Development Policy Centre (AMADPOC) and attended by policymakers, civil society and experts from Kenya and beyond.



Governance

- After releasing our study on the AU's citizen engagement and hosting two events for the EU-funded Charter Project Africa, we published a final paper summarising our work on the governance agendas of the AU and three regional economic communities.
- We organised the second global meeting of the EU-funded Partnerships for Sustainable Cities project in Barcelona, and published work on the limited role of local authorities in the Global Gateway strategy.
- We presented our report on European approaches to shrinking civic space, commissioned by Enabel as part of the Team Europe Democracy (TED) Initiative, at the high-level annual TED Initiative meeting. *See also page 24*



Youth and gender

- We presented our evaluation of EU support to youth in its enlargement and neighbourhood regions, undertaken with Particip, Ecorys and Mancala Consultores, at an 'InfoPoint' event organised by DG INTPA.
- The second season of our podcast series on gender explored various topics, including circular economy, financial independence, migration, the EU elections and violent extremism. *See also page 37*
- With the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Women, we organised a discussion on advancing gender equality through public finance and fiscal policy in Brussels.



Peace and security

- We presented our work on the EU's engagement in fragile settings – undertaken with ETG and the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS) for Enabel and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) – at a public event in Brussels, gathering over 100 policymakers and practitioners. *See also page 22*
- Building on our expertise in the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, we organised two workshops for DG INTPA's G5 unit on peace, security and resilience. One focused on implementing the nexus, while the other explored how to link it to Global Gateway initiatives in fragile and conflict-affected countries.
- We examined the cost of Europe's inconsistent approach to Israel's wars in the Middle East, as well as key questions for the EU following the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria.



Go to ecdpm.org/work for all our 2024 publications and commentaries; you can use the filters to narrow your search. For an overview of the events we organised, go to ecdpm.org/events.

[A snapshot of our year]

Why international cooperation matters for European interests



After the 2024 EU elections and subsequent selection of Europe's new leaders, the EU's political landscape is set for a transformation. The tone of the new European Commission differs markedly from that of Ursula von der Leyen's first mandate, with its outward-facing 'geopolitical Commission'. While an EU withdrawal from the world is unlikely, we may see a shift towards a more inward-looking union.

In 2024, we launched our project 'To the new leaders of Europe', a series of commentaries and videos exploring the implications of new European political appointments and power shifts. These provided insights on consequences, not only for Europe itself but also for its global partners, who are faced with navigating a more interest-driven European agenda. Throughout the project, we emphasised the importance of international cooperation in advancing the EU's interests and highlighted the value of investing in strategic global partnerships.

Ahead of the European Parliament elections in June, we published nine commentaries exploring issues including the EU's approach to Ukraine and Eastern Europe, migration, human development, climate policy, industrial policy and the role of the private sector. After the EU election results were announced, we shared our initial reactions in short videos reflecting on the potential implications for the EU's global engagement.

As Ursula von der Leyen was confirmed for a second term as European Commission president, we explored her vision for Europe and for international partnerships. Following

the announcement of her new team, we also published short video reactions. Finally, ahead of the November hearings for the now-confirmed commissioners, we published two more commentaries. One focused on the hearing of Josef Síkela, the new international partnerships commissioner. The other analysed the mission letters and responses of the commissioners for international partnerships and for preparedness, crisis management and equality, highlighting the Commission's focus on fragility.

We received positive feedback on the work from several organisations, leading to invitations to speak at various events. In 2025 and beyond, we will continue to monitor new developments as the EU's new leadership shapes its priorities. A key area of focus will be the EU's next long-term budget, which carries significant implications for Europe's partners in the years ahead.

Want to learn more about our work on EU foreign and development policy? Visit ecdpm.org/eu-foreign-development-policy or get in touch with Alexei Jones, Mariella Di Ciommo or Amandine Sabourin via ecdpm.org/experts.



Learn more about this series from [Mariella Di Ciommo](#)

Within the EU's long-term budget – the MFF – external financing instruments play a key role in promoting sustainable development, responding to crises and building partnerships around the world. With over €100 billion allocated to these instruments, their effectiveness and impact are crucial.

In 2024, at the halfway point of the current MFF (2021–2027), we were involved in a major mid-term evaluation of the EU's external financing instruments, led by Particip and published by the European Commission. We focused primarily on NDICI-Global Europe, the EU's financial instrument for neighbourhood, development and international cooperation, building on our expertise with the instrument. The evaluation was unique in scope, encompassing a wide range of thematic areas and geographical regions. As the only think tank involved in this formal process, we brought our expertise on aspects of EU external action, ranging from development finance and foreign policy to security and migration, combining extensive literature reviews, consultations and in-depth analysis.

The evaluation provided lessons for the future of EU external financing. For instance, we found that while NDICI-Global Europe is generally fit for purpose, it needs more flexibility to adapt to the rapidly changing global landscape and respond better to crises like the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's war in Ukraine. The evaluation also stressed the importance of clearer development, economic and geopolitical objectives for better implementation. Finally, it underscored the need for long-term

approaches and effective change management within the EU institutions, to ensure that the new policies and instruments are well understood and put into practice.

Our contributions to this evaluation fed into key EU policy discussions and influenced debates on the future direction of the external financing instruments. The European Commission and the Council of the EU both drew on our findings and insights in official documents. In a widely read commentary, we broke down the findings for a wider audience.

Looking ahead, we are building on the insights gained from the evaluation to contribute to the negotiations on the next MFF (2028–2034), which are set to start in mid-2025. We will be providing recommendations on the EU's external financing instruments under the new MFF, to equip the EU to address the challenges and opportunities of an increasingly complex and unpredictable world.

Want to learn more about our work on the EU's instruments for external financing? Visit ecdpm.org/mff or get in touch with Alexei Jones or Andrew Sherriff via ecdpm.org/experts.



Learn more about this work from [Alexei Jones](#)

[A snapshot of our year]

Shaping the future of EU external financing



[A snapshot of our year]

A comprehensive mapping of labour migration pathways



Europe is facing an ageing population and shrinking workforce, leading to significant labour shortages in multiple sectors. Many EU countries are turning to labour migration as a solution. This creates a complex EU labour migration landscape in which each member state follows its own system.

Two years ago, we mapped the labour migration pathways of Estonia, the Netherlands, Poland and Portugal in a study with the Migration Partnership Facility, which is implemented by ICMPD and funded by the European Commission. Strong interest in the case studies led us to expand the analysis to all 27 EU member states.

We conducted a comprehensive literature review and spoke to government officials, social partners, private sector representatives and labour migration experts in each country. This resulted in a first-of-its-kind, comprehensive mapping of labour migration pathways across all 27 EU member states, to help policymakers, employers and partner countries navigate these complex systems.

Our mapping identifies countries' labour market needs, political landscapes and legal frameworks. It also assesses the efficiency of migration pathways, including processing times and requirements. We produced detailed reports, concise country

summaries and infographics for quick overviews. Additionally, we developed an interactive tool that lets users explore countries' labour migration pathways by skill level, sector and stay duration.

Ultimately, the work provides valuable insights into the complexities and evolving dynamics of labour migration in the EU. Government officials can use our analysis to learn from other member states' approaches. For non-EU countries engaged in a skills partnership with the EU, the findings can help in navigating existing migration pathways and sector-specific workforce needs. Finally, employers can use the insights to explore options for attracting skilled talent from outside the EU. Beyond that, we hope the outputs spark a wider discussion on the state of labour migration governance in EU member states.

Want to learn more about our work on migration and mobility? Visit ecdpm.org/migration-mobility or get in touch with Anna Knoll or Amanda Bisong via ecdpm.org/experts.



Learn more about the project from [Anna Knoll](#)

How the EU can work in fragile settings



Fragile and conflict-affected settings face significant challenges in achieving stability and sustainable development. With more countries being affected by complex crises, exacerbated by climate change, geopolitical tensions and humanitarian emergencies, the need for coordinated responses and increased funding has never been greater.

In 2024, we explored how the EU can better support resilience in fragile settings. For the European Commission, we evaluated the EU Trust Fund for Africa, focusing on the implementation and outcomes of the fund's resilience objective in the Horn of Africa. The final report and lessons learned were presented at an 'InfoPoint' event organised by DG INTPA in March 2025. We also facilitated an exchange on EU engagement in fragile contexts with the Council Working Party on Development Cooperation and International Partnerships (CODEV-PI) and the Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA) during the Belgian EU presidency.

Funded by GIZ and Enabel, and with IDOS and ETTG, we examined how the EU, European international cooperation agencies, humanitarian actors and peacebuilding organisations operate in fragile settings. Drawing from interviews with over 30 experts and practitioners, we identified challenges and opportunities for more effective engagement and explored how a deeper understanding of fragility can strengthen the objectives of the EU's Global Gateway strategy and its Team Europe approach. The work zoomed in on the central Sahel – a region that exemplifies the complex interplay of challenges found in many fragile contexts and one we have closely examined in recent years.

We presented and discussed our preliminary findings at a high-level roundtable and expert workshop in October, hosted by GIZ in Brussels, where we received valuable feedback and insights from a range of attendees. In December, we presented the final report to over 100 European policymakers and practitioners at a public event hosted by Enabel in Brussels. Coinciding with the start of the new European Commission, this work linked to two commentaries on the risks posed by an EU failure to respond effectively to fragile and conflict-affected settings.

Looking ahead, we will continue analysing EU policies on fragility and conflict, with a particular focus on the European Commission's anticipated integrated approach to fragility. With the ongoing negotiations on the EU's next long-term budget, there is now a key opportunity to shape a more effective response. Our work will aim to inform the negotiations and help shape policies to respond better to the realities and needs of fragile states.

Want to learn more about our work on conflict, peace and security? Visit ecdpm.org/peace-security or get in touch with Sophie Desmidt or Volker Hauck via ecdpm.org/experts.



Learn more about this work from [Sophie Desmidt](https://ecdpm.org/peace-security)



Healthy democracies depend on civic space – an ecosystem where citizens can freely organise and express their views, influence public decision-making and hold governments accountable. Yet, civic space is under growing pressure worldwide. In many regions, it is shrinking, posing a serious threat to fundamental freedoms and core democratic values.

In 2024, we conducted research on shrinking civic space for the Team Europe Democracy (TED) Initiative, commissioned by Enabel, to promote and defend democracy. We focused on six countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America, examining specific challenges and opportunities for protecting civic space in different contexts. Using a political economy approach, alongside over 30 interviews with civil society organisations, activists, embassies and development agencies, the work generated valuable insights on the interplay of political, economic and social factors that contribute to the shrinking of civic space.

Looking towards what the EU and its member states can do, our research emphasised the need to understand local contexts, as shrinking civic space manifests differently depending on setting and requires tailored responses. It also highlighted the value of engaging diverse actors – including youth influencers and artists – to promote civic space and reach new audiences. Finally, we found that reframing narratives to align with local values can effectively mobilise support and foster broader understanding.

We presented the work at the second annual TED meeting, contributing to the network’s discussions and shaping its future strategies for protecting civic space. Our research reports – one public and one internal to TED – offered concrete recommendations for the EU and its member states to strengthen their support for civic space. These include targeted funding, diplomatic engagement, innovative partnerships, a deeper understanding of evolving civic space components, and using the Global Gateway strategy as a new entry point.

Our work helped raise the profile of civic space as a critical issue for democracy support and contributed to a growing momentum for action in this area. We will continue to engage with TED and other partners on civic space issues, playing our part in the collective effort to safeguard this essential pillar of democracy.

Want to learn more about our work on governance? Visit ecdpm.org/governance or get in touch with Sara Giancesello or Amandine Sabourin via ecdpm.org/experts.



Learn more about this work from [Amandine Sabourin and Sara Giancesello](#)

[A snapshot of our year]

The importance of protecting civic space



[A snapshot of our year]

Supporting the Belgian EU presidency



Every six months, a different EU member state takes the helm of the Council of the EU. The presidency gives each EU country a turn at shaping the Union's priorities. But it is also a demanding undertaking, requiring significant resources, strategic vision and the ability to navigate a complex landscape of competing interests.

ECDPM has been privileged to support 32 of the 40 EU presidencies in the past three decades, building valuable experience in assisting EU member states during their terms. In the first half of 2024, we supported the Belgian presidency of the Council of the EU, providing expertise, capacity and strategic advice on a wide range of issues, both formally and informally. This included engagement with Council working groups, EU member states and African institutions.

A major focus this time was health. The Belgian EU presidency aimed to reposition this topic within Europe's development agenda by highlighting its economic and geopolitical dimensions. It also sought to strengthen the EU-Africa partnership, which had been strained by COVID-19 vaccine tensions. We helped organise and moderated several sessions at a high-level presidency event on the AU-EU health partnership and moderated sessions at an event on universal health coverage. Following these events, we published two analyses on the AU-EU health partnership.

We also presented recommendations for future-proofing the EU's financial architecture for development to the Council Working Party on Development Cooperation and International Partnerships (CODEV-PI). Similarly, we shared our insights on the Global Gateway strategy

– with proposals to provide greater strategic direction and better align EU interests with development goals – at the Working Party of Foreign Relations Counsellors (RELEX). Beyond these topics, we presented our findings on the impact of EU gender policy in NDICI-Global Europe to CODEV-PI, facilitated an exchange on EU engagement in fragile contexts with CODEV-PI and the Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA), and organised a session on African and European food systems during the Open Food Conference.

Our collaboration with the Belgian presidency helped position it on health, the Global Gateway strategy and development finance. We received positive feedback from the presidency and EU member states, who valued our role in advancing these policy discussions. Meanwhile, our engagement with African partners on health also deepened understanding of their perspectives.

In the second half of 2025, we will be supporting the Danish presidency.

Want to learn more about our work for EU presidencies? Get in touch with Karim Karaki or Andrew Sherriff via ecdpm.org/experts.



Learn more about this work from [Karim Karaki](#)

[A snapshot of our year]

Africa's journey to develop robust AI governance

As the global AI race accelerates, Africa's priority is strategic development rather than competition. The AU and its member states aim to ensure equitable access and strengthen infrastructure, while exploring the potential of AI to address the continent's unique needs. This requires a robust policy framework built on data sharing and collaboration.

In 2024, we explored the evolving landscape of AI governance in Africa, highlighting key developments – most notably, the adoption of an African strategy on AI. This led to one of our most-read publications of the year and several invitations to participate in global AI governance events. Among these were the D4D Hub AI Working Group meeting in Brussels and the OECD-AU AI Dialogue in Paris.

Our most significant work of the year focused on cross-border data sharing in Africa. Data sharing drives innovation. It creates economic opportunities and powers the AI ecosystem. For that reason, it is impossible to discuss AI governance or development without addressing data sharing. In a paper published in English, French and Portuguese, we examined Africa's continental vision for data sharing, analysing activities at the regional and national level, and assessing the policy and legal frameworks enabling data exchange among member states.

We also created an interactive tool mapping data policies, AI strategies and data protection laws across Africa. Offering a comprehensive

view of the digital policy landscape at both the continental and the national level, the tool provides essential information for advancing digital governance. It has become a go-to resource for navigating Africa's digital policies. In response to overwhelming positive feedback from organisations across Africa and Europe, as well as requests for updates, we will continue to develop the tool to ensure it remains a valuable resource.

Our work from 2024 has laid a solid foundation for our broader engagement on AI governance. Our focus in 2025 will be on AI for social good, examining AI use cases in health, education and agriculture. The aim will be to identify opportunities, challenges and policy recommendations for leveraging AI in these critical sectors. We hope to use these findings and our wider work on AI governance to feed into South Africa's G20 presidency in 2025.

Want to learn more about our work on digital cooperation and AI? Visit ecdpm.org/digital-cooperation or get in touch with Melody Musoni or Chloe Teevan via ecdpm.org/experts.



Learn more about this work from [Melody Musoni](#)

[A snapshot of our year]



Value chains serve as an economic bridge between Europe and Africa, despite the partners' differing priorities. Europe seeks clean energy and critical raw materials for enhanced industrial competitiveness and decarbonisation, while Africa prioritises economic growth and aims to move beyond mineral exports. However, these goals can be aligned through green industrialisation.

In 2024, we explored how African countries can reposition themselves in the global green transition, by leveraging green value chains for economic transformation and sustainable growth. Throughout this work, we emphasised the need for a mutually beneficial partnership between Africa and Europe as they pursue their different policy priorities.

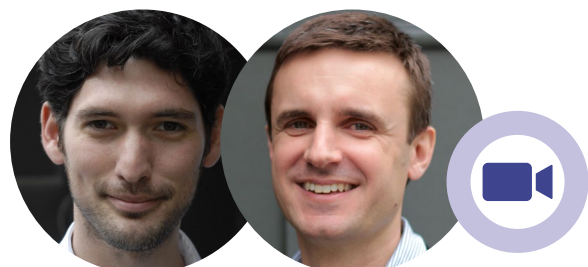
Following from earlier work, in which we developed a political economy methodology to assess green industrialisation strategies in Africa and explored opportunities for an African battery value chain, in 2024, we delved into views on resource nationalism. We also discussed the broader geopolitics of critical raw materials, for example, in the Extractives Podcast and an ECDPM podcast.

Looking at energy-intensive industries, we published a widely read interactive guide on green hydrogen for exports and industry, later expanding it with a study on green fertiliser production to drive industrialisation and agricultural growth in Africa. This work lies at the intersection of European industrial competitiveness and international cooperation. We also explored

how North Africa and Europe could benefit from a partnership in green steel, suggesting that importing hydrogen-derived hot briquetted iron from North Africa could support Europe's steel decarbonisation efforts. Finally, we analysed how developing countries can strategically navigate EU trade and climate policies, focusing on the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), which imposes a carbon price on imports like steel, aluminium and fertilisers.

Our work in this area has helped us forge new partnerships in Europe and Africa, and shape thinking on green industrialisation. This has included civil society engagement on the external dimensions of the European Commission's Clean Industrial Deal. In 2025, we will focus on aligning European and African economic and climate priorities, and the crucial links between energy security, industrial policy, trade and investment.

Want to learn more about our work on green industrialisation? Visit ecdpm.org/green-industrialisation or get in touch with Alfonso Medinilla, Poorva Karkare or Bruce Byiers via ecdpm.org/experts.



Learn more about this work from [Alfonso Medinilla](#) and [Bruce Byiers](#)

Green industrialisation as a bridge between African and European goals

[A snapshot of our year]

How partnerships can help scale investment in sustainable food systems

Food insecurity is rising, threatening progress towards SDG 2 on 'zero hunger'. According to FAO, more than 600 million people could be chronically undernourished by 2030 if current trends continue. Despite this, funding for sustainable food systems continues to fall short, and resources are being further constrained by shrinking development budgets and a more complex geopolitical landscape.

Financing is a critical yet often overlooked driver of food system transformation. A few years ago, we partnered with FAO to explore how targeted investment in key value chains – such as rice, onions, dairy, aquaculture and indigenous vegetables – could strengthen sustainability and resilience in African countries. Through various events, we also explored how public development banks can boost investment in sustainable food systems.

In 2024, we partnered with IFAD to elevate this conversation. We organised two events in Rome and one in Brussels, bringing together policymakers, investors, researchers and civil society representatives. These provided a platform for sharing knowledge, building partnerships and exploring innovative financing solutions. At the first Rome event, with the Italian G7 presidency, which we supported throughout 2024, we organised and moderated a closed-door discussion on IFAD's role in advancing the G7 Apulia Food Systems Initiative. The second Rome event, held around World Food Day, brought together representatives of IFAD, the World Bank, farmers and development finance institutions to discuss financing challenges for smallholders and small and medium-sized enterprises. The Brussels event, a consultative meeting in early 2025, saw IFAD present the preliminary findings of its Rural

Development Report 2025 and explore future collaboration with the EU.

These events deepened dialogue and set the stage for new partnerships and investments. Participants highlighted the value of hearing from small-scale producers and local investors, underlining the importance of inclusive, locally-grounded approaches. Strategic partnerships are key to scaling investments in sustainable food systems, leveraging expertise, aligning priorities and building the trust needed to channel finance into high-impact initiatives.

In 2025, we will build on the expertise, networks and partnerships we have developed. We will collaborate with AUDA-NEPAD, the AU's development agency, on initiatives aimed at effectively integrating policies across infrastructure, trade, climate and food security. A particular focus will be translating policy frameworks into actionable investment pipelines, to enable financiers to invest in climate-resilient and food-sensitive trade corridors.

Want to see all our work on sustainable food systems or learn more about what we do? Visit ecdpm.org/food-systems or get in touch with Francesco Rampa, Cecilia D'Alessandro or Koen Dekeyser via ecdpm.org/experts.



Learn more about this work from [Cecilia D'Alessandro](#)

Outreach and impact

Communications team

Communication is crucial for ECDPM to perform its role as a strategic broker for informed policy dialogue. Our mission is to stimulate dialogue with our partners and get ECDPM’s work and ideas to the right people, in the right way, at the right time. Our team is a multidisciplinary one. We bring together expertise in social media, press relations, digital and online communications, website development, writing and editing, multimedia and print publications, and graphic design.

In 2024, on top of our regular activities to strategically plan, promote and monitor ECDPM publications and events, we organised in-house training for staff on social media, media relations and podcasts. With the IT and learning and quality teams, we organised staff sessions on AI use and implications. Our video outreach grew in both quality and diversity, as we refined our content and explored new formats. On the social media front, we prioritised LinkedIn as a key platform for engagement and visibility, and established a presence on Bluesky.

We also enhanced our event systems and set-up to ensure smoother participant experiences. With Soapbox, we organised a WonkComms breakfast at our Brussels office to discuss the role of think

Our outreach and impact department aims to strengthen the quality, policy relevance, practical usefulness and impact of ECDPM’s work. It consists of two teams: a communications team and a learning and quality team.

tanks and policy researchers in a big election year – with former NATO spokesperson Oana Lungescu as our key speaker.

Finally, we worked closely with the migration and mobility team on the EU-funded DYNAMIG project on migration decision-making. After developing and implementing the project’s visual identity, website, and outreach and impact strategy in 2023, we continued in 2024 to provide advice, training and support to the project team to enhance the policy relevance and uptake of DYNAMIG research. We also presented at a policy workshop in Nairobi, organised by AMADPOC.

Learning and quality team

Our learning and quality team leads ECDPM’s strategic and operational planning and facilitates progress reviews of the work we do, considering our strategy and the evolving contexts we work in. The team strengthens the Centre’s monitoring and reporting approaches and systems. It also provides advice to elevate the quality of ECDPM outputs. Learning and review take place around theories of change. The team helps ECDPM’s workstreams and partners refine their research methodologies, including on AI use, gender (see box 3 on page 37), political economy analysis and policy coherence.

Data protection

To ensure compliance with the EU’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), we have implemented various policies and procedures, which we review and update annually. There were no data breaches at ECDPM in 2024. See our privacy policy at ecdpm.org/privacy.

WORK AND OUTREACH IN 2024

Website*



369,512 page views

139,057 visitors

* Visitors who decline cookies are not reflected in these numbers

Most-read in 2024



- (1) [What is driving change in Europe’s international cooperation agenda? Part 1](#)
- (2) [Envisioning Africa’s AI governance landscape in 2024](#)
- (3) [The mid-term evaluation of NDICI-Global Europe: Is the instrument fit for purpose?](#)
- (4) [Global Gateway: Where now and where to next?](#)
- (5) [Green hydrogen: The future of African industrialisation?](#)
- (6) [The EU in the Sahel: Be patient, united and critical](#)
- (7) [The EU and China in the Global South: Perspectives from African countries](#)
- (8) [What is driving change in Europe’s international cooperation agenda? Part 2](#)
- (9) [Interactive tool: Data policies in African countries](#)
- (10) [Von der Leyen 2.0 and a shifting approach to EU international partnerships](#)

Media



Interviews and articles on our work appeared in African Arguments, Africa in Fact, De Standaard, Deutsche Welle, Devex, El Universal, EURACTIV, POLITICO, Semafor and The Africa Report, among others

43 [media mentions and interviews](#)

Work



31 [commentaries](#)



27 [papers](#)



16 [briefs](#)



1 [\(interactive\) infographic](#)



1 [\(interactive\) guide](#)



7 [reports](#)



28 [events](#) (co-)organised

Social media



11,368 LinkedIn followers (+22.4%)



11,700 X followers



560 Bluesky followers



9,720 Facebook followers

Multimedia



10 [podcasts](#), 5 for the series ‘[Minding the gap: Conversations on gender](#)’, 4 on African perceptions of EU development policy shifts, and 1 on critical raw materials



2,400+ audio plays



18 video projects, producing around 50 videos



27,500+ video views on YouTube and 10,000+ on LinkedIn

In 2024, alongside our regular activities, we conducted a mid-term review of our [2022–2026 strategy](#). The review assessed our workstream choices, internal collaboration and the geographic focus of our work. A mix of desk research and internal discussions confirmed that our workstream choices remain well-founded, though we identified some challenges in fostering cross-team collaboration and addressing cross-centre topics. Africa–Europe relations continues to be a key entry point in most workstreams, but there is growing interest in expanding our scope to a more global remit. The review produced a set of takeaways and decisions to guide the second half of the strategy period (see box 2).

We also initiated preparations for an internal assessment and external evaluation of our 2022–2026 strategy. The internal assessment will serve as a key input for the external evaluation team and is intended to support broader organisational learning. The external evaluation, commissioned by our Supervisory Board, is scheduled for the second and third quarters of 2025.

Finally, we continued to monitor several centre-wide priorities using the internal monitoring tool we developed in 2022. The priorities will be reviewed in 2025, incorporating insights from the mid-term review and internal assessment.



[Box 2]

TAKEAWAYS AND DECISIONS FROM OUR 2024 REVIEWS AND MONITORING

The mid-term review and continued monitoring of the centre-wide priorities set in 2022 provided valuable insights into what has worked well and where there is room for improvement. These reflections led to a number of key takeaways and decisions. For example:

- Cross-workstream collaboration improved in 2024, though some workstreams continued to operate more independently due to their focus and targeted funding opportunities. Enhancing integration will remain a priority to ensure all staff can contribute fully to advancing the Centre’s mission.
- While the establishment of Centre priorities has been effective in guiding our outreach, for 2025, we have identified specific events as priority opportunities for outreach efforts.
- Internal management information systems are now used more systematically as a planning tool, resulting in improved reporting, particularly regarding our work with institutional partners.
- Staff are encouraged to dedicate more time to networking, staying connected, sharing their work and fostering partnerships.
- From 2025, AU–EU relations will remain a key Centre priority, but will be led by a dedicated in-house coordinator rather than managed as a workstream. Moving forward, we will focus on Europe–Africa policy processes while expanding our scope to include Europe’s role in global policy.

[Box 3]

GENDER MARKER



ECDPM’s [gender marker](#), introduced in 2022, guides staff to improve the extent to which gender is addressed throughout our work. It promotes the use of a gender lens and helps staff rank their research according to five levels, from ‘gender blind’ to ‘gender transformative’. Our target is for all our work to rank at least ‘gender sensitive’.

Ensuring understanding and uptake of the marker is in the joint hands of our gender coordinator, our three cluster focal points, and the outreach and impact department. Together, they encourage staff to consider gender and use the gender marker when planning their work. They also provide ongoing support to staff throughout their research and analysis.

We evaluate our progress in incorporating gender equality into our work on an annual basis. In 2023, we saw a notable improvement compared to 2022, with an increase in gender aware, sensitive, responsive and transformative publications. This encouraging trend continued in 2024, with a corresponding decline in gender blind publications. Furthermore, cluster discussions on our gender publication tracker results provided space to explore additional ways to strengthen our gender commitments. Finally, we released a second season of our podcast series dedicated entirely to gender: [‘Minding the gap: Conversations on gender’](#).

In 2025, we will continue to promote effective use of the gender marker to mainstream gender across our work. We will also encourage gender-specific publications and strengthen the visibility of [ECDPM’s work on gender](#).

Finances

Last year, we witnessed a substantial reshaping of the international and development cooperation landscape, including its finance structures. These sector-wide shifts had direct implications for think tanks such as ECDPM. Competition for more flexible funding intensified, with funders favouring short-term and outcome-oriented projects aligned with political priorities. There was also greater emphasis on visibility, partnerships and localisation.

In response, we adapted our business model to become more agile. We maintained a core team of policy experts while strategically relying on a growing network of associates and fellows to deliver expertise on demand. In addition, we prioritised cost efficiency in an effort to safeguard our financial stability.

Our income for 2024 totalled €9 million, which was slightly below the budgeted projection. Expenditures were well-managed, with notable savings achieved in operational, IT and personnel costs.

Our budget for 2025 reflects a leaner staffing structure and continues to prioritise cost efficiency, while delivering on our mission to shape and support impactful international cooperation and development policy.

Accountability

We continue to strive for the highest standards of accountability and transparency. Annually, an external auditor reviews our finances, financial procedures and internal control mechanisms. Our current auditor, EY, confirmed that our 2024 financial statements give a true and fair overview of the Centre’s financial position. The detailed financial report is available for review at our headquarters in Maastricht.

ECDPM funding overview 2024

Amounts represented in euros

INSTITUTIONAL FUNDERS		Total funding*
Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Netherlands	2,900,000
Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs / Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)*	Sweden	585,372
Belgian Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation*	Belgium	541,000
Irish Aid, Irish Department of Foreign Affairs*	Ireland	400,000
Luxembourg Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs*	Luxembourg	286,069
Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Denmark	265,830
Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs*	Finland	252,633
Austrian Development Agency (ADA) / Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs	Austria	200,000
Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs*	Estonia	6,088
TOTAL		5,436,992

* Also includes medium- and short-term funding. For a breakdown of institutional, medium-term and short-term funding, download our detailed funding overview at ecdpm.org/funding.

OTHER FUNDERS

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation**	United States	647,263
European Commission – DG INTPA F5 Digital Transformation	Belgium	356,753
Foundation to Promote Open Society (FPOS)	United States	281,559
European Commission – SIEA – Particip	Belgium	269,606
Open Society Foundation (OSF) Services Berlin	Germany	249,658
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)	Italy	175,764
European Commission – DG INTPA – Particip	Belgium	151,450
European Commission – International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)	Belgium	114,008
European Climate Foundation (ECF)	Netherlands	108,230
Stiftung Mercator	Germany	105,332
European Commission – SIEA – Particip	Belgium	86,711
European Commission – DYNAMIG – Kiel Institute for the World Economy (IfW)	Belgium	83,136
Enabel	Belgium	71,346
European Commission – DG INTPA – DAI Global Belgium	Belgium	68,778
HIVA – Research Institute for Work and Society, KU Leuven	Belgium	65,800
ODI	United Kingdom	55,555
Rijksdienst voor Ondernemend Nederland (RVO)	Netherlands	48,584
International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)	Italy	47,484
European Commission – StEPPFos – European Research Executive Agency (REA)	Belgium	44,906
United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)	Austria	41,491
European Commission – DG INTPA – Particip	Belgium	39,900
European Investment Bank (EIB)	Luxembourg	35,000
European Commission – EVA 2020 – Particip	Belgium	33,616
Agence Française de Développement (AFD)	France	32,169
European Commission – HORIZON PANAF – European Partnership for Democracy (EPD)	Belgium	31,681
Search for Common Ground	Belgium	27,087
Open Society European Policy Institute (OSEPI)	Belgium	25,063
University of Birmingham	United Kingdom	24,268
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)	Germany	19,405
European Commission – SIEA – Altair Asesores	Belgium	17,662
European Commission – DG INTPA – Particip	Belgium	16,200
European Parliament	Belgium	15,000
Elcano Royal Institute	Spain	14,350
Center for Global Development (CGD) Europe	United Kingdom	12,462
Africa-Europe Foundation	Belgium	11,870
African Climate Foundation (ACF)	South Africa	11,194
Centre for Migration Studies, University of Ghana	Ghana	10,400
King Baudouin Foundation	Belgium	10,300
European Commission – EU Delegation in Ethiopia	Belgium	9,299
Netherlands Food Partnership (NFP)	Netherlands	6,513
TradeMark Africa (TMA)	Kenya	6,295
Various other funders < Euro 2,500	Various	5,934
Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI)	Sweden	4,875
Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP)	Belgium	4,000
Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung (FES)	Germany	3,550
Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDR)	France	3,000
International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)	United Kingdom	2,975
London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine	United Kingdom	2,500
TOTAL		3,509,982

GRAND TOTAL

8,946,974

** The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation became the Gates Foundation in 2025.

Balance sheet

As of 31 December 2024
In thousands of euros

	2024	2023
ASSETS		
Non-current assets		
Intangible fixed assets	55	99
Tangible fixed assets	1,914	1,979
Financial fixed assets	4,989	4,669
Total non-current assets	6,958	6,747
Current assets		
Receivables	1,563	1,706
<i>Payments in advance</i>	<i>124</i>	<i>257</i>
<i>Trade debtors</i>	<i>1,439</i>	<i>1,449</i>
Taxation contributions	17	20
Cash	2,961	2,854
Total current assets	4,541	4,580
TOTAL ASSETS	11,499	11,327
LIABILITIES		
Current liabilities		
<i>Payables</i>	<i>502</i>	<i>552</i>
<i>Trade creditors</i>	<i>269</i>	<i>159</i>
<i>Employee-related creditors</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>83</i>
<i>Employee-related taxation due</i>	<i>186</i>	<i>310</i>
Other liabilities	2,224	2,480
Provisions	529	390
TOTAL LIABILITIES	3,255	3,422
EQUITY		
Retained reserves from prior periods	8,244	7,905
TOTAL EQUITY	8,244	7,905
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	11,499	11,327

Income and expenditure account

From 1 January until 31 December 2024
In thousands of euros

	2024 actual results	2024 budgeted results	2023 actual results
INCOME			
Institutional funding	5,204	5,266	5,266
Other funding received	3,743	4,502	3,843
Other income	50	0	53
TOTAL INCOME	8,997	9,768	9,162
EXPENDITURE			
Direct operational expenses	(1,150)	(1,735)	(943)
Salaries and other personnel costs	(6,790)	(7,693)	(7,115)
Accommodation expenses	(328)	(366)	(570)
General and administrative expenses	(490)	(387)	(374)
Information technology expenses	(108)	(139)	(148)
Depreciation	(145)	(176)	(162)
Other miscellaneous items	(38)	(35)	(113)
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	(9,050)	(10,531)	(9,425)
OPERATING RESULTS	(53)	(763)	(263)
INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO			
Interest and dividend income	133	*	91
Result of sales	72	*	(14)
Result on market value	200	*	317
Banking costs	(13)	*	0
Interest expense	0	*	(24)
TOTAL RESULT OF THE INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO	392	0	370
TOTAL RESULT	339	(763)	107
ALLOCATION OF RESULTS			
Contribution to retained reserves from prior periods	339	(763)	107

* The investment portfolio results are not taken into account in ECDPM's budgeting process.

Our people



ECDPM is home to an international team of policy, communications and support staff.



Our people

Investing in our people

We encourage our staff to grow professionally. To facilitate this, we allocate each staff member a yearly budget. This year, our staff took part in a range of training programmes to improve their skills and efficiency in a number of areas, including:

- Languages
- Social media, media relations and podcasts
- Information and communication technology
- Artificial intelligence
- Project management
- Finance and fundraising
- Leadership and personal coaching
- Confidential advisers
- First aid
- Occupational health and safety
- Human resources
- Mental well-being

Diversity and inclusion

We believe that a gender-balanced and diverse group of staff from Europe, Africa and beyond encourages new ideas and different ways of thinking and working. We aim to be an equal opportunity employer and promote diversity and inclusion among our staff and candidates – irrespective of gender, age, nationality, race, culture, religious beliefs, sexual orientation or disability. Our commitment to diversity and inclusion is detailed in our [strategy](#).

Throughout 2024, we implemented and actively monitored our action plan for 2024-2025, with support from a dedicated working group. Diversity and inclusion will now be discussed at the management level twice a year and embedded into our onboarding programme. The working group will also enhance communication efforts, both at



the management team level and across the organisation. Additionally, a formal reporting mechanism for harassment and discrimination has been integrated into our code of conduct, ensuring staff have a clear and safe way to raise concerns.

The mental well-being of our staff remains a top priority. We are actively implementing a range of initiatives to ensure our staff feel supported, both in and out of the workplace. For instance, we partner with the OpenUp platform to provide our staff with online tools to support their mental well-being. To foster social connection and a sense of community, we organise regular events and activities that bring colleagues together in informal, non-work settings.

In 2024, we conducted a staff survey to assess mental well-being and identify areas where ECDPM can provide enhanced support. Led by the human resources team and a dedicated mental well-being task force, the survey provided valuable insights that will shape our ongoing initiatives.

Sick leave at ECDPM

In 2024, our average sick leave was 5%.

Staff confidential advisers

We have two confidential advisers whom staff can approach to discuss any concerns or difficulties they face.

Our works council

Our works council represents staff on a variety of matters, especially personnel policy and employment conditions. In January 2024, a new five-member works council was elected for a two-year period. Throughout the year, the works council had constructive dialogues with the management team and informed the Supervisory Board on a range of topics, including:

- ECDPM's hybrid working policies
- Cost reduction measures
- Staff well-being
- The appointment of ECDPM's new director

Safety, health and well-being

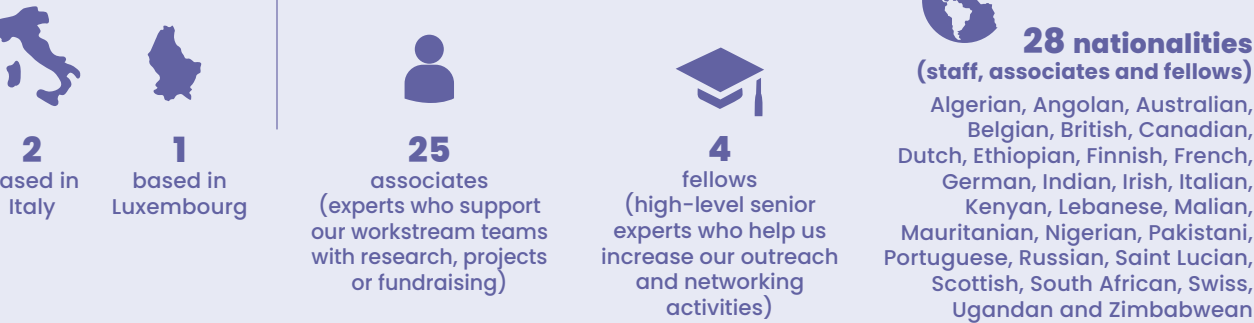
In 2024, no serious incidents or accidents occurred at our ECDPM offices or during our travels. We continue to take all necessary steps to ensure a safe and healthy workplace and safe travel practices, in addition to the procedures and safety measures already in place:

- We provide ergonomic office furniture and equipment to minimise occupational hazards associated with computer use.
- We facilitate staff requests for evaluations aimed at preventing or limiting health-related risks at work, in line with the Dutch Occupational Health and Safety Act.
- We have a team of emergency response officers who are certified on an annual basis.
- We conduct travel risk assessments and security briefings, and have emergency protocols in place for those visiting potentially high-risk areas.

At the close of 2024, we had 54 ECDPM employees:



Throughout 2024



Governance

Members of our Supervisory Board in 2024



Adebayo Olukoshi (Nigeria)
Chair of the Supervisory Board
Distinguished Professor at the Centre for the Advanced Study of Democracy and Development (Wits School of Governance, University of the Witwatersrand), Senior Associate Fellow at the Nordic Africa Institute, and Honorary Professor at the University of Edinburgh



Koos Richelle (The Netherlands)
Vice-Chair of the Supervisory Board
Member of the Dutch Advisory Council on International Affairs and Chair of its Commission on Development Cooperation, and former Director-General at the European Commission in the areas of development, employment, social affairs and inclusion



Marie-Roger Biloa (Cameroon)
Chief Executive Director of the Africa International Media Group and its branch MRB Productions, editorial writer, and consultant on public policy and economic intelligence



Said Djinnit (Algeria)
Senior Advisor to the European Institute of Peace and the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes, former Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, former Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and Head of the UN Office for West Africa, and former AU Commissioner for Peace and Security



Richard Dohmen (The Netherlands)
Director at Grouwels Vastgoed, member of the Board of Stichting de Weijerhorst, and former financial auditor at PwC



Bience Gawanas (Namibia)
Former Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa to the UN Secretary-General, former Special Advisor to the Namibian Minister of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare and the Minister of Health and Social Services, and former AU Commissioner for Social Affairs



Roeland van de Geer (The Netherlands)
Advisor to several think tanks and non-governmental organisations across Africa and Europe, former EU Special Representative to the African Great Lakes Region, and former Ambassador to South Africa, Mozambique, Tanzania, the East African Community and Afghanistan



Ruth Jacoby (Sweden)
Former Director-General for International Development Cooperation at the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, member of the UN High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence, former Executive Director of the Board of the World Bank, and former Ambassador of Sweden to Germany and Italy

Honorary advisor to the Supervisory Board on European external affairs:



Dieter Frisch (Germany)
Former Director-General for Development at the European Commission

Members of our management team in 2024



San Bilal (Switzerland)
Executive Director (as of October 2024) / Associate Director of Sustainable African Economies and Climate Action (until October 2024)



Carl Michiels (Belgium)
Executive Director (until October 2024)



Mariella Di Ciommo (Italy)
Associate Director of Europe and Africa in the World



Sophie Desmidt (Belgium)
Associate Director of Peaceful Societies and Accountable Governance (as of March 2024)



Lidet Tadesse Shiferaw (Ethiopia)
Associate Director of Peaceful Societies and Accountable Governance (until March 2024)



Bruce Byiers (United Kingdom)
Associate Director of Sustainable African Economies and Climate Action (as of October 2024)



Andrew Sherriff (Scotland)
Associate Director of Institutional Relations and Partnerships



Marleen Ackermans (The Netherlands)
Head of Human Resources



Virginia Mucchi (Italy)
Head of Outreach and Impact



Riaan Paul (South Africa)
Chief Operating Officer



For more information about our management team and the Supervisory Board, please visit ecdpm.org/about/governance.

Our partners

Partnerships are at the heart of our work. Partners inspire new ideas and enable systematic exchanges of experiences and best practices. Most importantly, combined efforts are more powerful than any individual, uncoordinated actions could ever be.

ECDPM collaborates with a broad range of partners who increase the value of our work. Our inputs, in turn, add value to work done by others. We also connect our partners, stimulating strategic collaboration among them towards common goals.

Institutional partners

Austrian Development Agency (ADA) / Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs

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African Climate Foundation (ACF)

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CONCORD

Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)

Council of the European Union

CREAF

DAI Global

Delegation of the EU to the AU

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

E3G

Eastern Africa Farmers Federation (EAFF)

ECCO Climate

Elizade University

Enabel

European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI)

European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA)

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)

European Climate Foundation (ECF)

European Commission

European External Action Service (EEAS)

European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed)

European Investment Bank (EIB)

European Parliament

European Partnership for Democracy (EPD)

European University Institute (EUI)

Europlus

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA)

Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS)

Foundation Open Society Institute (FOSI)

Foundation to Promote Open Society (FPOS)

French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES)

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Good Food Finance Network

Gorée Institute

Groupe ODYSSEE

HIVA – Research Institute for Work and Society, KU Leuven

INCLUDE Platform

Institute of Development Studies (IDS)

Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP)

Institut für Europäische Politik (IEP)

Institute for Security Studies (ISS)

Institute for Technology and Society of Rio de Janeiro (ITS Rio)

Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)

International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)

Invest International

Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

Joint European Financiers for International Cooperation (JEFIC)

Kiel Institute for the World Economy (IfW)

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MDF Training & Consultancy

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Mohammed VI Polytechnic University (UM6P)

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Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment (NCEA)

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Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA)

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Search for Common Ground

SNV Netherlands Development Organisation

SOLIDAR

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Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI)

The China Project

Thinking and Working Politically (TWP) Community of Practice

TradeMark Africa (TMA)

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER)

UN Women

University of Birmingham

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ODI

** The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation became the Gates Foundation in 2025.*

Are you interested in partnering with us? Get in touch with Andrew Sherriff or Kathleen Van Hove via ecdpm.org/experts.

Sustainability

ECDPM promotes better international policies that benefit sustainable global development. But making the planet a better place starts with us. We recognise that given the nature of our work, our efforts and activities inevitably impact the environment. We aim to minimise this environmental impact through compliance with regulations and legislation and via our own initiatives. Integrating sustainability into all our daily activities is a learning process, but we eagerly work towards that goal.

Integrating sustainability

Our Maastricht office – known as the Pelican House – is the only Art Nouveau building in Maastricht and is listed as a building of national historic value by the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands. In 2021, we received a five-year grant from the agency for the building's preservation. Due to its historic value, we are somewhat limited in the types of changes we are allowed to make to the building's interior and exterior. However, we remain committed to implementing sustainability improvements wherever possible.

We have integrated environmentally aware principles into our procurement and office processes. For example, we exclusively source office furniture made from sustainable resources. We have introduced several smart solutions at our Maastricht office, including low-power light sensors and a temperature control system. These allow for real-time monitoring and help us prevent wasteful energy consumption. Thanks to these changes, we reduced our energy consumption by 8% in 2024.

Our office space in Brussels is located in a multi-company building owned by Clockwise. The building is easily accessible by public transport, and the offices are furnished with high-quality products from sustainable resources.

Travel

We aim to reduce travel through intelligent use of electronic communications and video conferencing. We also incentivise public transportation, in particular by rail, to minimise our travel footprint. However, travel by plane is unavoidable, given the nature of our work. We therefore continue to participate in the Bluebiz CO2ZERO service, which contributes to the reforestation project CO2OL Tropical Mix in Panama and holds a 'Gold Standard for the Global Goals' certificate.

Sustainable sourcing

Our purchasing policy emphasises sustainable products and services. Whenever possible, we work with local suppliers who stand by this commitment. We also aim to offer healthy, sustainably sourced catering. Our cleaning services provider, too, is dedicated to environmentally friendly practices, including the use of natural cleaning products. This approach not only ensures a clean and healthy work environment for our staff and guests but also minimises our environmental impact.



Concept
The concept for this report was developed by Nina Thijssen, Virginia Mucchi and Yaseena Chiu-van 't Hoff.

Texts
This annual report includes texts by Nina Thijssen, alongside contributions from colleagues. The project stories on pages 16 to 33 benefited from AI-assisted content generation based on video transcripts, thoroughly checked and edited by our team. During the drafting phase, AI served as an editorial aid, while subsequent language editing was provided by Michelle Luijben. Proofreading was carried out by Jacquie Dias, Isabell Wutz and Nina Thijssen.

Videos
The videos were conceptualised by Virginia Mucchi and Jonathan Hunter, and filmed and edited by Jonathan Hunter.

Art direction and design
The original design concept was developed by Yaseena Chiu-van 't Hoff. Art direction and design for this report were led by Robin van Hontem.

Thanks to everyone who contributed to the report.

Photo credits

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Storm. Photo: [Trifonov_Evgeniy via iStock](#).

Page 4
ECDPM Supervisory Board Chair Adebayo Olukoshi. Photo: University of Johannesburg.

Page 5
ECDPM Executive Director San Bilal. Photo: Jonathan Hunter, ECDPM.

Page 6 and 7
ECDPM's Bruce Byiers speaks at an event on green energy transition in the Global South, organised by ECDPM, the Thinking and Working Politically (TWP) Community of Practice and The Policy Practice in Brussels. Photo: Jonathan Hunter, ECDPM.

Page 8 and 9
ECDPM's Sophie Desmidt (on the left), Volker Hauck (in the middle) and Sara Ganesello (on the right) at a high-level roundtable and expert workshop on the EU's engagement in fragile settings, hosted by GIZ in Brussels. Photo: Elio Germany for the GIZ Representation Brussels.

Page 12
Top – ECDPM's Pauline Veron and Karim Karaki at a high-

level event on the EU–AU health partnership, organised by the Belgian presidency. Photo: Isabell Wutz, ECDPM.

Bottom – ECDPM's Karim Karaki (on the left) and San Bilal (on the right) at an ECDPM event on European climate and development finance in Brussels. Photo: Jonathan Hunter, ECDPM.

Page 13
Top – ECDPM's Melody Musoni (on the left) at the OECD–AU AI Dialogue in Paris. Photo: OECD.

Middle – ECDPM's Cecilia D'Alessandro moderates a side event at the Committee on World Food Security's 52nd plenary session on enhancing financial support for sustainable food systems, organised by IFAD, ECDPM and partners. Photo: Alessia Valentini.

Bottom – ECDPM's Cecilia D'Alessandro speaks at a high-level side event on integrating climate action into African food systems at COP29 in Baku. Photo: Alfonso Medinilla, ECDPM.

Page 14
Top – ECDPM's Nina Thijssen (on the left) during a policy workshop organised by AMADPOC for the DYNAMIG project in Nairobi. Photo: Gilbert Otieno for AMADPOC.

Middle – ECDPM's Poorva Karkare (on the right) speaks at a webinar on multilateralism and the role of bilateral partnerships in governing critical raw materials, organised by ECDPM and the University of Sussex in Brussels. Photo: Jonathan Hunter, ECDPM.

Bottom – ECDPM's Amanda Bisong and Bruce Byiers (on the left) with representatives of African regional economic communities, the AU and service associations at ECDPM's Brussels office. Photo: Carlotta Maria Paschetto, ECDPM.

Page 15
Top – ECDPM's Amandine Sabourin and Sara Ganesello at the high-level annual TED Initiative meeting in Brussels. Photo: ECDPM.

Middle – ECDPM's Volker Hauck speaks at a high-level roundtable and expert workshop on the EU's engagement in fragile settings, hosted by GIZ in Brussels. Photo: Elio Germany for the GIZ Representation Brussels.

Bottom – ECDPM's Sara Ganesello and Sophie Desmidt (on the right) at a discussion on gender equality, organised by ECDPM, UNDP and UN Women at ECDPM's Brussels office. Photo: UNDP.

Page 16
ECDPM's Mariella Di Ciommo talks about our series of commentaries and videos on the EU's new leadership. Photo: Jonathan Hunter, ECDPM.

Page 19
ECDPM's Alexei Jones talks about our work for the mid-term evaluation of the EU's external financing instruments. Photo: Jonathan Hunter, ECDPM.

Page 20
ECDPM's Anna Knoll speaks at the annual team meeting of the DYNAMIG project in Florence. Photo: Jonathan Hunter, ECDPM.

Page 22
ECDPM's Sophie Desmidt speaks at a high-level roundtable and expert workshop on the EU's engagement in fragile settings, hosted by GIZ in Brussels. Photo: Elio Germany for the GIZ Representation Brussels.

Page 25
ECDPM's Amandine Sabourin talks about our research on shrinking civic space. Photo: Jonathan Hunter, ECDPM.

Page 26
ECDPM's Karim Karaki moderates a session at a high-level event on the EU-AU health partnership, organised by the Belgian presidency. Photo: [Julien Nizet, Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union via Flickr \(CC BY 2.0\)](#) – modified (cropped).

Page 28
ECDPM's Melody Musoni talks about our work on cross-border data sharing in Africa. Photo: Jonathan Hunter, ECDPM.

Page 31
ECDPM's Alfonso Medinilla speaks at a workshop on green industrialisation, organised by ETTG, the Ukama platform, ECDPM and IDDRI at ECDPM's Brussels office. Photo: Jonathan Hunter.

Page 32
ECDPM's Cecilia D'Alessandro speaks at the 2024 ReSAKSS Annual Conference in Rabat, organised by AKADEMIYA2063, the African Union Commission and PCNS. Photo: Tidiane Oumar BA, AKADEMIYA2063.

Page 37
ECDPM's Amandine Sabourin (on the right) interviews H.E. Mmasekgoa Masire-Mwamba, Botswana's ambassador to the Kingdom of Belgium and permanent representative to the EU (on the left) for an ECDPM podcast series. Photo: Jonathan Hunter, ECDPM.

Page 42
Top left – ECDPM's Sara Ganesello at a high-level roundtable and expert workshop on the EU's engagement in fragile settings, hosted by GIZ in Brussels. Photo: Elio Germany for the GIZ Representation Brussels.

Top right – ECDPM's Bruce Byiers at the Namanga one-stop border post between Kenya and Tanzania. Photo: ECDPM.

Bottom left – ECDPM's Kathleen Van Hove (on the left) and San Bilal (on the right) with SAIIA director Elizabeth Sidiropoulos (in the middle) at an event on (South) Africa on the global stage, organised in Brussels by ECDPM. Photo: Jonathan Hunter, ECDPM.

Bottom right – ECDPM's Poorva Karkare (second from the left) at the Global Review of Aid for Trade 2024 in Geneva. Photo: ECDPM.

Page 43
Top left – ECDPM's Chloe Teevan speaks at informal conversation on the implications of the evolving political landscape for the new EU leadership, organised at ECDPM's Brussels office. Photo: Jonathan Hunter, ECDPM.

Top right – ECDPM's Andrew Sherriff, Mariella Di Ciommo and Karim Karaki facilitate a training session at the European Parliament. Photo: ECDPM.

Middle – ECDPM's Hanne Knaepen with Peter Schwartzstein, who presents his book 'The Heat and the Fury: On the Frontlines of Climate Violence' at ECDPM's Brussels office. Photo: Jonathan Hunter, ECDPM.

Bottom – ECDPM's Daniel Adeniyi and Koen Dekeyser (fourth and sixth from the left) during a research visit to the National Horticultural Research Institute in Ibadan. Photo: Farmer Lawrence.

Page 45
ECDPM's Pauline Veron speaks at the annual conference of the Institut für Europäische Politik (IEP). Photo: William Vedder, IEP.

Page 47
ECDPM's board members at ECDPM's head office in Maastricht. Photo: Nina Thijssen, ECDPM.

Page 51
ECDPM's head office in Maastricht. Photo: Ernst van Loon.

Contact us

ECDPM has two offices:
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and Brussels (Belgium).

We would love to hear from you.
Contact us by telephone or email.
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