

2023 Annual Report

# Forging a green, democratic and peaceful future for all



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# A letter from the Supervisory Board

As Chair of the ECF's Supervisory Board, I have the privilege of overseeing an organisation at the forefront of Europe's journey towards a more sustainable and resilient future.

2023 not only tested our resilience but also underscored the critical importance of our mission, amid heightened political polarisation, a worrying resurgence of populism, and profound geopolitical upheaval — including the ongoing war in Ukraine. Despite the mounting array of challenges we face, I am struck by the ECF's remarkable dedication, inventiveness, and agility in continuing to drive ambitious climate action.

The achievements and progress outlined in this annual report are, above all, a testament to the hard work of ECF employees, and that of our grantees and partners. The ECF continues to have a profound impact, leveraging its unique position to nurture a stronger, more united climate movement. Through grant-making and a range of strategic tools and activities, the ECF shapes policy, fosters collaboration and amplifies diverse voices.

This owes much to the Management Team's strategic vision, encapsulated in eight 'big bet' programme portfolios, aiming to ensure that climate solutions are an integral part of Europe's response to its pressing economic and security challenges. The ECF is well-positioned for the years ahead, with an expanding scope that integrates nature, biodiversity, and resilience, alongside a continuous focus on a just transition that resonates across and beyond Europe.

I invite you to explore the pages of this report, which not only highlight our achievements but also outline our path forward in these critical times. Together, we are advancing our mission for a green, democratic, and peaceful Europe.

On behalf of the Supervisory Board, I'd like to extend our gratitude to all who have contributed to our journey this past year.

Kate Hampton



# A message from Laurence Tubiana

2023 was a tough year in many respects. In Europe, the well-documented 'climate backlash' began to translate into scaled-back climate policy — a trend that has continued into 2024. The international context was one of further geopolitical volatility and fragmentation. Powerful vested interests that benefit from the status quo have been emboldened in their efforts to frustrate positive change, often resorting to underhand tactics to distract from the scientific consensus on the need to rapidly phase out fossil fuels.

Given these circumstances, it is easy to lose sight of the tremendous progress we have made in the last five years. An ambitious and comprehensive pan-European climate programme seemed a distant prospect at the time of the last EU elections, in 2019. We now have exactly that, in the form of the European Green Deal. Many more countries around the world have climate targets enshrined in law, there is a great deal more investment flowing into implementing the transition, and at COP28, countries finally confronted the elephant in the room by agreeing to transition away from fossil fuels.

These big steps forward didn't happen by chance. They were the product of tireless activism by a diverse and dedicated coalition of organisations and individuals, which I'm proud to say ECF has been an integral part of.

The context was far from benign, with the profound shock of the Covid-19 pandemic and the terrible impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The spirit of resilience and collaboration that allowed our movement to emerge stronger from these will serve us well for the formidable challenges ahead.

In this next critical implementation phase, the obstacles we face are as much political as they are technological. The vast majority of Europeans share our deep concerns about climate change. Our mission now must be to ensure that the transition works in their broader interests, and that it is socially just and equitable.

We and our partners have vital work to do to ensure politicians across the political spectrum appreciate the energy transition's central importance to Europe's security and competitiveness, and to its citizens enjoying healthier, safer and more prosperous lives.



Wherever possible, we should seek to empower our fellow citizens. As the growing popularity of citizens' assemblies attests, when people are empowered to address issues affecting them, they tend to confound the cynics.

Finally, we cannot take our license to operate for granted. Democracy itself is in retreat around the world, and space for civil society is being deliberately squeezed. Those of us engaged in the fight against climate change must build alliances with other causes and stand up together for our right to work for a better world.

Let's never forget that Ukraine and its people continue to make huge sacrifices in defence of our shared European and democratic values. Ukraine's struggle is fundamentally reshaping Europe. The energy transition and emancipation from fossil fuel dependence must be central to the vision for Europe's future we build together.

2024 is proving to be another challenging year. But I firmly believe that the ECF, alongside our partners and with the fantastic support of our funders, is well-positioned to navigate it.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'La Tubiana', located at the bottom left of the text area.

# 2023 in review

## Forging a green, democratic and peaceful future for all

2023 saw the articulation and implementation of our strategic vision to leverage ambitious climate action for a green, democratic, and peaceful Europe. To bring about this vision, we focus on eight interconnected strategic portfolios, which cluster our activities for greater impact. We ground our strategies at the country level, with 10 national and regionally focused teams, to make sure our efforts are tailored and responsive to local considerations. We incorporate strategic communications into all our work to help deepen and broaden public and political support for climate action. As part of this, we focus on the economic sectors that are critical to the climate transition.

Thanks to the generous support of our donors, we act as a field catalyst for climate action in Europe and across the globe. We centre our work on learning, adapting our approach in response to new developments, and supporting our partners in building their own capacities.



**As a strategic grant-maker**, we fund a diverse range of over 700 partners, collaborating with them to identify and support interventions that will get us closer to climate safety.



**As a narrative shaper**, we use strategic communications to inform key decision-makers, foster discussion on climate, and strengthen broad-based support for climate action. With a network spanning the political spectrum in countries across Europe and the world, we drive dialogue with business, governments, and civil society.



**As a network enabler**, we foster a stronger, more resilient network by helping our partners build their capacities and create new connections. We also incubate and sustain new organisations, platforms, and coalitions to fill the gaps in the climate ecosystem.



**As a thought leader**, we work with our partners to set the agenda and co-develop impactful strategies for climate action. We also convene, coordinate, and connect diverse actors from across the climate community and beyond.

In 2023, we progressed work across our eight strategic portfolios, working with our partners to place climate solutions at the heart of the response to the economic and security challenges facing Europe.



## A new team and vision for Learning & Impact

In 2023, we refreshed our Learning & Impact (L&I) vision for the years ahead, outlining how we will use systemic strategies, emergent learning, and impact measurement to ensure the most responsible, effective use of our resources.

Our new L&I model seeks to 1) develop a tailored **ECF-wide impact management approach**; 2) **understand the impact and contributions** of our work and support; and 3) **bring evidence and impact data to life** so we can tease out our contributions towards long-term and collective impact. This way, our team will serve as a catalyst for collective impact and learning across the ECF and the climate ecosystem — harnessing the power of our network’s collective intelligence whilst sharing knowledge and driving radical collaboration.

## Sharing our learnings to catalyse collective impact

Although we’re early in our journey towards a new Learning & Impact model, we have already collected valuable lessons under our three main pillars of work (people, politics and policies) and our organisational transformation. Going forward, these insights will enable us and our network to adapt our strategies in an increasingly complex context. Here are some of our main insights and lessons from the past year.



## People

### Addressing people’s concerns about the transition

The cost-of-living crisis has put citizens’ calls for increased prosperity, fairness in public spending, and economic security at the top of the agenda. In response, we and our network are focusing on three areas to make sure that climate policies more closely resonate with people’s priorities:

1. **Generating widespread public support for the green transition**—ensuring that climate policies deliver not only lower emissions, but also resilient infrastructure and employment opportunities, comfortable and secure housing, affordable energy and food, pollution-free cities, and thriving biodiversity.
2. **Improving our understanding of public sentiment, attitudes, and intentions**, by collecting insights in a data hub that is accessible across our network. These resources will enable us to work towards policies that more closely resonate with people’s priorities.
3. **Broadening the climate community**, reaching out to new constituencies such as trade unions, faith groups, businesses, and conservatives.



### Anticipating and addressing backlash through strategic communications

In 2023, despite broad public support for the transition holding up across Europe, we witnessed significant backlash to certain environmental policy proposals. For instance, we saw push-back to low emission zones in urban areas as well as high-profile controversy over proposals to end the sale of gas heating systems. Amidst concerns that the green transition could raise costs for households and businesses during these tough economic times, some politicians are responding by diluting or rolling back climate commitments instead of investing to ensure climate solutions are affordable, accessible and drive economic prosperity.

We and our partners are responding to this challenge by engaging and building trust with people exposed to populist misinformation campaigns, and those heavily affected by the transition like farmers. We’re also working to shape dialogue with citizens and businesses on specific local issues, where implementation has the potential to become a “flashpoint”; and supporting those advocating at the national and European level for full consideration of the social and economic dimensions of climate policies. It is crucial that distributional impacts of climate policies are fully assessed, and that accompanying investment is commensurate to what is needed, and fairly paid for.



## Politics

### Galvanising support from across the political spectrum

In 2023, we witnessed growing political debate over climate-related topics across Europe. There's an increasing risk of polarisation of the debate along cultural and political lines, but it is essential that addressing the climate crisis remains an issue of consensus across the political spectrum and across geographies.

To tackle this challenge, we and our partners are engaging with organisations across the political spectrum who offer policy solutions that can appeal to diverse perspectives. As part of this effort, we are focusing on working with organisations promoting positive, innovative solutions. We are avoiding directing support to those who stoke division or favour imposing solutions that are impractical or unaffordable. We're also engaging more with those who have traditionally been underrepresented by the climate movement to foster more inclusive dialogue with people from across society.



### Fostering a shared European vision but with ownership at the country level

Addressing climate issues at the European level has laid bare the challenges of unifying a bloc of 27 countries in the EU — as well as the UK and Türkiye — with distinct cultures, priorities and political landscapes around a common climate agenda. To maintain local political momentum on climate goals amidst shifting political headwinds, we've learned that we need to enhance local leadership and ownership, especially at the national level.

As a result, we are increasingly grounding our work at the country level, investing more in local partners and capacity. As of 2024, we are adopting a country-first approach, setting strategies and stress-testing them with ECF employees and partners with strong place-based networks and deep understanding of local contexts.



## Policy

### Tracking corporate action and enhancing regulatory standards to ensure accountability and transparency

The trend of nations, international coalitions, and public and private companies making public climate pledges continued throughout 2023, and many are now working to make these pledges a reality. However, as the transition becomes increasingly complex, there is a risk of lack of accountability and transparency on what progress — or lack thereof — is being made toward these pledges.

To ensure that these pledges are honoured and enacted, and laws are effectively implemented, we're working with local and global leadership coalitions to advocate for ambitious nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and net zero implementation. We are also pushing for regulatory frameworks to mandate corporate liability for climate impacts, and to hold public leaders accountable for the quality of their spending.



### Combatting greenwashing

A growing sea of greenwashing threatens to distract from the facts and undermine the integrity of environmental labels and claims. To address this, we and our network have been working to produce rigorous data and scientific analysis. We're also pushing for regulatory frameworks to mandate corporate liability for climate impacts, and effectively monitor policy and regulations. As part of this, we supported the creation of a new independent watchdog — the [European Climate Neutrality Observatory](#) — to ensure EU climate governance gets and stays on track with net zero commitments and delivery. In 2024, we and our partners continue to gather the data and evidence to help track and interrogate the integrity of 'green' initiatives.





## Organisational design

### Adapting our organisational design so we are fit for purpose

To successfully grapple with our expanded size and an increasingly complex external context, we are also adjusting our organisational design so that it's fit for purpose. This involves several projects to improve our organisational structure, processes and ways of working.

In 2024, we are focusing on building out our new Learning and Impact model; enhancing our collaborative, learning culture; fostering innovation within ECF and with our partners; and expanding our organisational design and capacity building services to the field. Our new internal Transformation Office will provide dedicated project management support and advice for these processes.









# European and national just transitions

Pushing for fair, effective climate policies at the national and European levels

## Our European country programmes

We ground our work at the national level, with 10 country and regionally focused programmes as well as employees and partners across Europe. Our European country and regional programmes:

|   |
|---|
|  <b>Central and Eastern Europe</b><br>  Croatia   Czechia   Slovakia   Slovenia   |
|  <b>France</b>  <b>Germany</b>  <b>Italy</b>  <b>Poland</b>            |
|  <b>Southeast Europe</b><br>  Albania   Bosnia & Herzegovina   Bulgaria   Cyprus   Georgia   Greece   Hungary   Kosovo   Moldova   Montenegro   North Macedonia   Romania   Serbia  |
|  <b>Spain</b>  <b>Ukraine</b>  <b>United Kingdom</b>  <b>Türkiye</b> |

To complement our local- and national-level work, we also have a dedicated programme working on EU institutional and governance issues such as the European Green Deal.

## 2023 key developments

In 2023, we worked to further ground our strategies at country level, which is essential for building political will, broadening the climate movement, and achieving policy wins in key geographies. Despite attacks on climate action by vested interests, our partners secured a number of wins.

### Germany: shifting our strategy in response to new headwinds

The past year saw several challenges to climate action in Germany, which required rapidly rethinking our approach. A critical setback came in November, when Germany's top court ruled that the government's decision to partly fund the green transition by reallocating €60 billion in unused coronavirus aid is unconstitutional. In response, we helped build a coalition of partners who are working on financial issues to make sure that the transition stays on track, advocating for alternative funding solutions to fill the gap.

In 2023, the government also agreed to a landmark heating transition law to phase out oil and gas heating in buildings. The plan was heavily watered down, following months of political infighting within the governing coalition and a bruising tabloid campaign against the law. Nonetheless, the law makes Germany the first large economy to shift to green heating, and our partners were instrumental in defending progress in the public debate. Going forward, in our role as narrative shaper, we and our network are ramping up our efforts to boost public support and engagement around new policies such as the shift to clean vehicles and heating. We're also developing proposals to ensure that social protections are factored into climate policies from the outset.

### Ukraine: laying the foundations for a green, resilient recovery

Launched in 2022 and headed by Iryna Stavchuk, formerly Ukraine's Deputy Minister responsible for climate change policies and European integration, our Ukraine programme aims to mainstream green, climate-proof solutions for the country's recovery.

In 2023, together with our partners we made progress in strengthening resilience, supporting new infrastructure for energy security, and laying the foundations for Ukraine's environmental recovery. For instance, we supported public initiatives in several liberated cities that are developing strategies for resilient reconstruction. We also backed the deployment of solar stations at hospitals and other facilities so they can continue operating safely — a role model that other communities are now replicating.

More broadly, we supported the NGO community and experts in Ukraine in forming a common position on the principles of green reconstruction. Laurence Tubiana is also participating as a member of the High-Level Working Group on the Environmental Consequences of the War, which culminated in the **Environmental Compact for Ukraine**. The Compact was presented to President Volodymyr Zelensky and other Ukrainian stakeholders in Kyiv in February 2024.

We're now working with our partners to help bring this to the agenda of European and international decisionmakers, and to implement its recommendations.



*In October, Laurence Tubiana and Iryna Stavchuk participated at the meeting of the High-Level Working Group (HLWG) on Environment in Kyiv and at events of the Conference United for Justice-United for Nature.*

*The ECNO launch event in Brussels, where we discussed the observatory's first flagship report, "State of EU progress to climate neutrality"*



*The Environmental Compact for Ukraine was presented to President Volodymyr Zelensky and other Ukrainian stakeholders in Kyiv on 9 February 2024.*

## Launch of the European Climate Neutrality Observatory

To help ensure the EU gets and remains on track to deliver a climate neutral future, in 2023 we launched the [European Climate Neutrality Observatory \(ECNO\)](#). Composed of some of Europe's leading research organisations, with expertise spanning the fields of climate policy, governance, economics and finance, ECNO aims to support and hold EU institutions to account in the successful delivery of the European Green Deal.

ECNO applies an innovative methodology that has been specifically designed for this new phase of climate action, tracking live progress on over 100 indicators for the needed shifts in the real economy. As such, ECNO is an invaluable tool for European policymakers, journalists, civil society and philanthropy with an unprecedented 360° view on the state of the transition, able to flag key bottlenecks.

*Solar station on hospital in Kremenchug commissioned with ECF support.*





## Fossil-Free Energy

### Accelerating a just transition to secure, affordable clean energy

Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the shocks to energy security and the economy that followed, exposed more than ever the steep environmental costs of our dependence on fossil fuels.

We're working to put Europe on track to phase out coal and gas and replace them with cleaner, more secure energy sources. Together with our partners, we are also promoting energy solutions that are affordable, accessible, and backed by the public. We support an energy transition which improves security, strengthens European industry, and provides good quality jobs.

## 2023 key developments

We and our network have been increasingly prioritising clean energy as the answer to the security, cost-of-living and climate challenges we face. In 2023, we focused on three main areas: grids as a key enabler of renewables; ensuring a fair transition to clean heating; as well as accelerating the global transition to renewable energy.

### Power grids as a key enabler of a renewables-based power system

As the backbone of our energy system, electricity grids are key to the clean energy transition. However, lack of grid capacity is slowing down the transition in Europe. For the EU to bring renewable energy to its citizens and empower them to produce it, we must develop electricity grids further and faster. Overcoming this barrier requires considerable investment but will ultimately make the European economy much stronger and more resilient.

In face of these challenges, in 2023 we helped convene a network of partners calling on the European Commission and other actors to address the electricity grids bottleneck. Experts from groups such as Ember, the Renewables Grid Initiative, and CAN-Europe also put forward specific policy recommendations to help shape the response. These efforts paid off when the Commission announced the [EU Action Plan for Grids](#) in November 2023. With the plan published six months before the end of its mandate, the Commission sent a strong signal that grids should remain a priority after the European elections.

Now, our partners are working to keep grids high on the political agenda in the run-up to the elections to ensure that the next Commission comes up with concrete proposals to ease the grids bottleneck. We are also doing research and scoping work to ensure that the costs of investment in grid upgrades are shared fairly across society.

### Ensuring a fair transition to clean heating

In addition to the power sector, clean heating will be critical to the energy transition. As part of this work, we are bringing new voices into the call for action to decarbonise Europe's buildings.

Throughout 2023, we helped convene social justice and consumer rights organisations so they can meaningfully engage in policymaking to ensure that the transition is fair to all. This includes the Right to Energy coalition, European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless (FEANTSA), European Consumer Organisation (BEUC), and national partners. Additionally, we are working with diverse voices who can speak to policymakers across the political spectrum. This includes the industry sector, with whom we have strengthened relations through our active collaborations with groups such as the Coalition for Energy Savings and Electrification Alliance, and as founding members of Clean Heat Europe. We also supported macroeconomic and finance partners such as Bruegel, and security voices such as Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) in the UK.

Thanks to the work of this community, at the end of 2023 a deal was reached on the EU buildings law. The new law charts a course for the EU to achieve a net zero building stock by 2050, by mandating governments to tackle leaky buildings and plan for a phase-out of fossil fuel boilers.

## ReNew2030

### ReNew2030: accelerating the global transition to renewable energy

In 2023, we were delighted to launch [ReNew2030](#), a coalition of experts, civil society and philanthropic organisations that receives funding through [The Audacious Project](#) to accelerate the global transition to wind and solar power over the next five years.

ReNew2030 partners are working toward a first, fast, fair energy transition by mobilising key actors in government, business, and communities around the world. The coalition's goal for 2030 is to increase global wind and solar capacity by 500% in the countries responsible for over 80% of the power sector emissions in order to improve energy security, create new jobs and deliver health, climate, and economic benefits.

Following the official launch at [TED Countdown](#) in July, we began implementing our work in earnest, notably signing a [new partnership](#) with the [Drive Electric Campaign](#) to accelerate the transition to renewable energy and electric transportation. The partnership centres on the role of electrification and critical raw materials to scale a climate-secure and just transition in transport and energy.

ReNew2030 partners also helped contribute to the groundbreaking pledge made by 130 countries at the opening of the COP28 to triple renewable energy production by 2030. Going forward, ReNew2030 will work with partners on the ground to turn this goal into real projects that meet the needs of communities around the world.



**How to supercharge renewables and energize the world**  
715,456 views | Rebecca Collyer | TED Countdown Summit • July 2023

*At its official launch at TED Countdown event in July 2023, ReNew2030 lead [Rebecca Collyer](#) and our partner [Kala Constantino](#) (Tara Climate Foundation) delivered two insightful speeches on how to significantly increase renewables globally that have now garnered over 1 million views.*





2050 Pathways Secretariat, implementation partners and member representatives at the 2023 Annual Meeting in Bonn

## Europe in the world and international affairs

Building international partnerships to strengthen the climate transition in Europe and worldwide

Europe plays a catalytic role in advancing the world's climate objectives. In addition to reducing its own emissions, it supports the global climate transition through diplomacy and cooperation with other countries and regions on issues such as finance, trade, investment, and sustainable supply chains.

Our international team works with partners in Europe and around the world to build and sustain critical political space for global progress on climate. As part of this, we work to ensure that Europe delivers on its climate promises to (re)build credibility and leadership, while strengthening multilateral alliances for action. Our international work is also deeply integrated with our other focus areas — from climate finance to fossil-free energy to industrial strategy.

## 2023 key developments

### Europe in the world

#### Fostering EU-US dialogue on climate

To foster strong transatlantic climate dialogue in the lead-up to COP28, we convened several events to help align key players on strategy and planning. This included the 9th EU-US dialogue on climate change, which brings together key decisionmakers and thought leaders from Europe and the US to tackle the big issues on the path to net zero.

The dialogues, which started in 2020, follow the Chatham House rule to encourage inclusive discussion and serve as a safe space to identify opportunities for joint action and devise collaborative solutions. Discussion topics include the European Green Deal, the Inflation Reduction Act, reforming multilateral development banks and debt architecture, transition minerals, and transatlantic industrial policy and trade implications. Now, we are preparing new climate dialogues between decisionmakers from the EU and other parts of the world, with a focus on several countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

#### Envisioning the future of trade in a net zero world

International trade can play a vital role in the transition to a global net zero emissions economy. In 2023, we conducted a year-long strategic foresight project to explore [The Future of Trade in a Net-zero World](#), culminating in a comprehensive [report](#) that details what international trade could and should resemble by mid-century. The report outlines an ideal vision for the future of trade and climate action, along with strategic policy options to help navigate future uncertainties.

Launched at the European Parliament in November 2023, the report suggests how Europe could play its part in reaching this vision through practical and easily deployable initiatives, while recognising the need for robust international partnerships,

especially with developing countries. At COP28, we presented the report to an international audience at COP's first-ever Trade Day. The report is expected to be a vital tool in supporting decision-making around taxation and finance reform, clean energy supply chains, corporate responsibility, and new trade rules.

### International affairs

#### Working to make COP28 count

Our international teams focused on global climate action, such as the International Climate Politics Hub (ICPH) and [2050 Pathways Platform](#), were hard at work throughout the year, culminating with the 28th UN Climate Change Conference (COP28). The ICPH's global network was on the ground in Dubai to gather information, conduct diplomatic interventions, and deliver daily expert briefings on key negotiated issues for 1,700+ decision-makers, informing their work and creating a coordinated call for action. This work played an important role in securing key language around transitioning away from fossil fuels, progress on the Loss and Damage fund, and seeing the links between climate, food and nature reflected in the COP28 outcomes. In the months leading up to COP28, the 2050 Pathways Platform also provided critical support to countries in Central America (Guatemala, Mexico) and Africa (Botswana, Lesotho, Senegal, Nigeria) on development of their Long-Term Strategies to move their nations to net zero.

We and our partners had a solid contingent in Dubai, convening allies, shaping conversations, and working to make this COP count with a strong focus on fossil-fuel phaseouts. Our CEO and senior members of our international team also engaged with media, diplomatic leaders and civil society, and participated in or co-organised events alongside other climate leaders. Looking ahead, we will further invest in international collaboration on topics critical to the global climate transition, such as critical raw materials.

## Pushing for a global renewable energy target

Throughout the year, we made coordinated efforts to **push for a global renewable energy target** through alignment with the International Energy Agency (IEA) and other actors, notably through a dedicated event at October's **'Climate and Energy Summit: A Grand Coalition to Keep 1.5 °C Within Reach'** in Madrid and a steady drumbeat of behind-the-scenes coordination throughout the year. This helped lay the groundwork for the landmark goal set at COP28 of tripling global capacity by 2030.

Our international teams had a strong presence at **Climate Week New York** in September 2023, exemplifying the role we play in facilitating dialogue across multiple fronts at important points in the global climate community calendar. This included extensive diplomatic work resulting in bilateral meetings with key partners and government representatives from Australia, Brazil, Chile, Indonesia and other countries. We also hosted some key events, including one with Bloomberg Philanthropies on championing subnational climate action and ambition, and a climate and nature event to discuss how enhanced cooperation can help protect and improve the natural world, with stakeholders from Europe, the Americas and Africa.



*Laurence Tubiana joins Antha Williams (Climate and Environment Programme Lead at Bloomberg Philanthropies and ECF Board member), Paris Mayor Mme Anne Hidalgo and others to discuss integrating multi-level climate action into the Paris Agreement and how achieving our climate goals will require deeper partnership with local leaders.*



We supported the Edinburgh TV Festival's first-ever Climate Content Summit, which convened an industry debate about networks and platforms' response to the global climate crisis.

## Citizen engagement & cultural change

### Strengthening broad-based democratic support for climate action

Underpinning all of our strategic portfolios is our work engaging citizens and strengthening broad-based democratic support for climate action.

We partner with news, digital, and cultural organisations with the expertise to help engage, inform and inspire people from diverse backgrounds and perspectives. Alongside this, we're working to expand the range of channels where climate debates take place, going beyond traditional media spaces to meet people where they are. We also work with organisations using innovative participatory methods to empower people to discuss and help shape a net zero future, such as climate movement organisers, faith-based organisations, and citizens' assemblies.

## 2023 key developments

### Gleaning audience insights and combatting disinformation ahead of the European elections

With a view to the European elections, 2023 saw a growing focus on ensuring that our action is driven by data — with expanding efforts to track public opinion and behaviour and engage with partners who shape the discourse in key battlegrounds. For instance, we commissioned widespread, in-country polling that provided the vital data and audience insights to inform country, thematic and international communications strategies. This allowed us to identify priorities of different demographic groups, deepen our understanding of what messages work for them, and strengthen our work with groups who are under-represented but electorally important. Alongside these efforts, we are also ramping up our collaboration with fact-checking organisations across Europe to debunk climate disinformation.

### Unleashing the power of entertainment to drive climate action

The average person spends four hours a day looking at their screens — four hours with the potential to shape narratives, shift social norms, and drive behavioural change on climate. But until now, the climate movement has largely overlooked the power of entertainment.

To help change this, in 2023 we started teaming up with new partners across Europe, including directors, screenwriters, production companies, and events such as the Edinburgh TV Festival and Cannes Film Festival. We organised high-level events to raise awareness of the climate gap in popular entertainment; helped convene top decisionmakers from the industry; and are developing trainings for screenwriters

and TV programmes from across Europe. This work will expand in 2024, with a focus on further building the ecosystem, sharing expertise and advancing research.

### Enhancing public participation in climate policymaking

In 2023, our community of governance partners helped improve public participation in the update of the 10-year national energy and climate plans (NECPs), which set out how EU countries intend to meet their energy and climate targets for 2030. We helped connect them with democracy partners, including the ECF-incubated [Knowledge Network on Climate Assemblies](#) (KNOCA), for advice, support and capacity-building to enable better advocacy.

Their work on the NECP update has helped bring policymakers' attention to the importance of public participation in climate decision-making. It's also helped build bridges between the governance and democracy communities, strengthening players in both areas so they can use their voices more effectively in the future.

### Boosting our mobilisation and communications work in France

In **France**, where the political debate is becoming less ambitious on climate, we are strengthening our mobilisation and communications work in collaboration with a diverse range of partners. For example, from its inception we've supported **Banlieues Climat**, an association that aims to mobilise, raise awareness and inspire people in working-class neighbourhoods on environmental and climate issues, to bring their voices into the public debate and empower them to act.

In its first year of operation, Banlieues Climat provided 8-hour trainings to more than 600 young individuals, parents, and community leaders from socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods on climate-related issues in their daily lives. The trainings have resulted in successful community organising and mobilisation efforts in the areas of health, food, transport, access to nature, and more. Banlieues Climat is highlighting that although these neighbourhoods are often the first victims of the climate crisis, they can also be at the forefront of finding solutions. They have succeeded in reaching some of the biggest national media (Libération, France TV, Brut) and have gained more than 1.5 million followers on social networks.

Making smart use of data and audience insights we've helped gather, our partner organisation **Conséquences** has been leading several campaigns to highlight the impacts of climate change on major issues, such as cultural heritage, key industries, and natural landscapes. Their work has helped boost public awareness and support for the need to act on climate, particularly among typically disengaged communities. In August 2023, they launched a Facebook campaign on lavender fields in Provence, which highlighted the impacts of climate change on this iconic crop.

We are also supporting **innovative projects on social media channels**, such as with **Aware Collective**, a club of climate-conscious lifestyle influencers. The group is teaching fellow influencers how to stop incentivising carbon-intensive consumerism, and how to promote more sustainable fashion and travel. Charlotte Lemay, the model who launched the group, recently did several talk shows to promote her new book, *Responsible Influencer*.



Camille Etienne (climate activist), Khadim Coulibaly (trainer at Banlieues Climat) and Férís Barket (co-founder of Banlieues Climat) at the organisation's first anniversary celebration



An image from one of Conséquences's campaigns on lavender fields in Provence, referencing how climate change poses a threat to the region's natural heritage



Members of Aware Collective during one of their workshops on responsible influencing





## Clean transport

### Ensuring a fair transition to clean, affordable transport

Countries across Europe are moving to slash pollution from vehicle tailpipes, which are responsible for more than a quarter of Europe's climate footprint and a major source of air pollution. We're helping ensure that this transition to cleaner transport is fair and effective, benefits our health and environment, and has support from consumers, auto workers, and the rest of society.

## 2023 key developments

With support from our network, 2023 saw significant progress in clean transport, following the 2022 landmark decision to phase out internal combustion engine vehicles by 2035. This came after years of coordinated campaigning and advocacy by more than 120 of our partners.

### Setting the 2035 clean car target

Following the milestone to make all new cars and vans zero-emission, in March 2023, the European Council approved new CO2 standards setting stricter emission performance standards for new cars and vans. From 2035, new cars that run on petrol or diesel will no longer be allowed to be sold in the EU, with an exception for vehicles running 100% on e-fuels. To achieve this, we helped coordinate a diverse coalition of partners, including environmental NGOs, trade unions, consumer organisations, and industry partners, working in Brussels and at Member State level.

A critical part of the EU's Fit for 55 package, which aims to prepare the EU to reduce its net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030, the 2035 clean car target represents by far the most ambitious CO2 regulation for cars and vans worldwide. In addition to setting the 2035 target, the legislation also raised the interim 2030 emissions reduction target, forcing automakers to ramp up the sale of electric vehicles over the coming few years.

This was accompanied by another linchpin in the shift to a Europe with zero emission vehicles: the deployment of an Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulation (AFIR). This regulation sets the pace and the minimum standards for a massive deployment of infrastructure for electric vehicles across Europe. To secure this important regulation, we helped convene a broad spectrum of voices working both in Brussels and at country level to convince key decisionmakers. Going forward, we are working with partners in key Member States to ensure proper implementation.

### New CO2 standards for trucks: A gamechanger for reducing emissions and improving air quality in Europe

In 2023, our partners helped shape an agreement on the CO2 standards for Heavy-Duty Vehicles (HDV), which comprises trucks and buses. This legislation, which was approved by the European Parliament in April 2024, mandates that truck makers reduce the average emissions of new vehicles by 45% in 2030, 65% in 2035 and 90% in 2040. While a higher emission reduction target for 2025 was not secured, all new urban buses sold must be zero emission by 2035.

An important win for this network was also the expansion of the scope of the regulation to include vocational vehicles, such as garbage trucks and concrete mixers, as of 2035 — greatly increasing the number of vehicles on European roads that must reduce emissions in the years ahead. With HDVs such as trucks, city buses and long-distance buses responsible for more than 25% of greenhouse gas emissions from road transport (in 2019), if passed and well-implemented, this legislation would significantly reduce emissions and improve air quality in Europe.

### Building our partners' communications capacities

To ensure the success of these policies, engaging citizens and building public support for a shift to clean transport is key. In light of this, as part of our broader organisational development strategy, in 2023 we launched our first communications bootcamp for 30 of our partners in the transport sector. Featuring senior communications and media professionals, we delivered bootcamps on topics from navigating crisis communications, to combating misinformation on sustainable mobility, and unpacking the value of media, digital and public engagement. Over 90% of participants found the bootcamp helpful and are now applying it in their everyday work.





# Europe's industrial transformation

## Enhancing Europe's long-term prosperity while strengthening security

Changes in global politics and economics are upending assumptions about Europe's economic model and fuelling debate over the future of European industries. Europe must now design an industrial strategy that will help decarbonise and spur innovation in the manufacturing and heavy industry sectors; develop competitive, resilient clean tech value chains; and create a level playing field with its trading partners.

Our work on Europe's industrial transformation aims to make sure that climate-friendly production technologies are embedded into broader modernisation and investment agendas. We also strive to ensure that future investment cycles are aligned with the Paris Agreement and consider the altered geopolitical landscape in Europe. Our goal is a European economy that is greener, more resilient, competitive, and secure in the face of evolving challenges.

Beyond Europe, we also promote new alliances based on shared strategic trade and investment interests, aiming for more diverse, resilient supply chains with stronger environmental and social safeguards.

## 2023 key developments

The past year saw a welcome emerging focus from European decision-makers on industrial strategy. This comes as part of a recognition that both the US and China are putting serious efforts into their own industrial policy, including ensuring significant domestic production of clean technologies (renewables, batteries, heat pumps, low carbon materials, etc.) and improving the security of clean energy supply chains.

Our partners have been instrumental in securing unprecedented policy progress in this area: a global ambition to triple the rate of deployment of renewables this decade, a strengthened Emissions Trading System, and the introduction of a Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, amongst other milestones.

### Key progress on green industrialisation

In 2023, we worked to improve coordination and maximise our impact across the intersecting themes of industry, energy, buildings, transport, finance, trade and international affairs. This approach yielded a strong result in December, when EU deals were struck on two important policy frameworks that will greatly accelerate the decarbonisation of heavy industry — the Ecodesign of Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR) and the Construction Product Regulation (CPR).

For two years, our Industry and Buildings programmes partnered with civil society across Europe to create a coordinated push for this legislation, which contains several landmark achievements. The ESPR is set to be a game-changer in limiting the carbon footprint of products and increasing circularity, including components such as the introduction of a requirement for a European Digital Product Passport — a standardised and harmonised list of product information that will ensure transparency and facilitate greater circularity and repairability of products.

Going forward, we are focusing on implementing our cross-cutting green industrialisation strategy, working with our partners to help shape and respond to key upcoming EU industrial policy discussions.





The Global Solidarity Levies Task Force held its second sherpa meeting in Washington, D.C. around the spring meetings in April 2024.

## Financing a just transition

### Making finance flows consistent with the Paris Agreement

Tackling climate change will require a fundamental shift in the global financial system to support the transition to a low-carbon economy. Recent crises have led to high interest rates and prices, exacerbating the need for further financing of the transition. Meanwhile, outdated international financial infrastructure means the Global South desperately lacks access to funds to address and mitigate climate change.

We seek to tackle these challenges by increasing financial flows, especially to the Global South, that facilitate a just transition in line with the Paris Agreement. Our work helps to scale up financing, bring greater integrity to carbon markets, build capacity, and work towards better regulation and transition planning for businesses and financial institutions across Europe. We're also considering ways to generate new sources of finance to further climate action, for example through windfall taxes to tackle oil & gas profiteering and reform of the multilateral financial institutions.

## 2023 key developments

In 2023, we shifted our lens to new areas, focusing on advancing the reform of the international financial architecture. We also convened our partners to make key progress on the EU sustainable finance agenda and plan next steps in light of the elections — including securing a major advance in corporate sustainability and due diligence.

### Global Solidarity Levies Task Force for climate action and sustainable development

There is an urgent need to generate new sources of finance to scale up green, climate resilient development in the Global South: by 2030, it's estimated that developing countries excluding China must mobilise \$2.4 trillion each year to adequately address climate change.

In the face of this gap, we've been working with our partners to set up the [Global Solidarity Levies Task Force](#) for climate, development and nature action. With our support, the task force is now co-chaired by France, Kenya and Barbados, and was officially launched at COP28. Antigua & Barbuda, Spain, the Marshall Islands, Ireland and Colombia have officially joined the task force, and other governments are in discussion to do so. The ECF is hosting the task force's secretariat, with the European Commission, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and UN participating as observers.

The task force helps open a conversation that was previously taboo. Fossil fuel subsidies total about \$7tn per year, contributing to oil and gas industry profits of \$4tn, while climate change causes huge loss of wealth and wellbeing in many countries. New climate levies on private air travel, financial transactions, maritime fuel, carbon damages, fossil fuel profits and reinvesting fossil fuel subsidies could raise billions per year to make the financial system fairer and more equitable.

Co-chaired by our CEO Laurence Tubiana, the task force secretariat held its first meeting in Washington, D.C. in April 2024, where members agreed to work together to ensure the most polluting industries and people contribute to financing the fight against climate change. Going forward, we are working with the task force members to put forth proposals and promote international agreements for progressive tax options at COP30.



## A key step towards corporate and financial sector accountability

In our role as network enabler, we helped coordinate a wide coalition of partners to achieve adoption of a robust **Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD)** in Europe. This ground-breaking law fosters sustainable, responsible corporate behaviour, and anchors human rights and environmental considerations for companies' operations. It also establishes an unparalleled global standard for the implementation of substantive climate transition plans.

To help achieve this, we supported and coordinated a strong, highly skilled and experienced coalition of European and national civil society organisations and progressive businesses conducting advocacy, policy and campaign work. The fight isn't over yet — going forward, we will continue to support and coordinate the coalition to uphold the ambition of this key legislation. Based on recent efforts to overturn the law, we and our partners are also learning to prepare for a more conservative-leaning political context and develop new narratives and ways of engagement to ensure the EU maintains its climate ambition.





## Land, food and nature

### Building land use and food systems that support people, communities and nature

How society uses land, especially for food production, has a major impact on people and planetary health. For instance, decades of intensive factory farming have increased greenhouse gas emissions, harmed biodiversity, and contributed to social problems in rural areas — while failing to provide secure access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food.

To address this, we are working to build climate and nature-friendly land use and food systems that prioritise the needs of farmers, rural communities, and consumers. We are also promoting solutions to make sure bioenergy is kept within sustainable limits and that nature-based solutions such as restoring forests do not displace reductions in fossil fuel use.

## 2023 key developments

### Depolarising the debate on food, climate and nature

As seen in other areas such as transport, 2023 saw increasingly polarised debate on land, food and nature topics at national and EU levels. Certain populist politicians have sought to exploit farmers' and rural communities' real concerns about the impacts of climate change, Russia's war on Ukraine and the cost-of-living crisis. This was manifested in an effort by some European politicians to block the Nature Restoration Law (NRL). **Our partners succeeded in mobilising unprecedented public and business support for the NRL** and helped it secure a razor-thin victory in the European Parliament in July 2023, followed by its adoption this year. This highlights the importance of depolarising action on climate and nature — a central element of our approach. To that end, in our role as narrative shaper, we also supported **strategic communications initiatives to raise awareness** and ensure the public debate on climate and nature is evidence-based.

### A growing focus on nature and biodiversity

Over the past few years, we've developed a more holistic, proactive approach to nature and biodiversity across our work. This mirrors the increasingly integrated discussion at international level, where we see the climate and nature agendas coming together, for instance in the need to generate sufficient finance for protecting and restoring nature. At COP28 (for the UNFCCC) and COP15 (for the UN Convention on Biodiversity) we saw that ecosystems integrity, biodiversity, and the importance of natural sinks have now entered the mainstream agenda, with a new global commitment to conserve at least 30% of the planet, among other pledges.

In 2023 we started working on an overarching climate and nature strategy, and this work will continue in 2024. The strategy aims to mainstream work on nature across the ECF's programming, ensuring better internal alignment and developing new or upscaling current priorities for both climate and biodiversity. The work will focus on nature finance, i.e. how to ensure the flow of adequate financing towards nature protection and restoration, and the need to align the climate transitions in the food, transport and energy sectors with nature protection and restoration.



## Landing the EU Nature Restoration Law

In June 2024, EU governments officially adopted the Nature Restoration Law (NRL), the EU's proposal to restore natural ecosystems and the first continent-wide, comprehensive law of its kind. The law introduces quantified time-bound targets for restoring 20% of land and sea in the EU area by 2030 and almost all degraded ecosystems by 2050. Over the past three years and ramped up ahead of the parliamentary votes in 2023, we supported a campaign aimed at securing the adoption of the NRL.

We backed research projects and communications activities to debunk myths on food security, while stepping up support for the #RestoreNature coalition of green NGOs and building alliances with new voices. We boosted communications in several countries including Austria, whose change of position on the law helped secure adoption in the last round of negotiations, and helped to build a groundswell of voices in support of nature in five key Member States. Our funding helped mobilise support from more than a million citizens, 100+ businesses and business networks, 9,000+ scientists, progressive farmers and forest managers, the wind energy and solar industry, European hunters, financial institutions, European mayors and faith leaders.

This achievement is the result of years of work and advocacy from many of our partners in critical geographies across Europe. Going forward, the ECF network will mobilise to ensure the smooth implementation of the legislation at national level starting in 2025.

*ECF partners and others take to the streets in Strasbourg to urge the European Parliament to support the EU's Nature Restoration law. Strasbourg, 2023.*





We welcomed 26 participants from 10 countries across Southeast Europe at the New Energy Academy

## Building a robust climate ecosystem

Strengthening the effectiveness and resilience of our network is central to delivering our mission of creating a net zero world. In our role as network enabler, we build new organisations, develop networks and support partners through organisational development.

### Expanding our capacity building and organisational development support

According to a recent review of our network's resilience, many of our partners face capacity gaps with strategic planning, funding, skills development, operations management and other issues. At the same time, the challenges they face are not getting easier, with growing government restrictions on civil society organisations in many countries.

As the leading strategic grant-maker and network enabler in the European climate ecosystem, we decided it was critical to address this. In 2023, building on our existing experience in capacity building and incubating new organisations, we developed a dedicated organisational development strategy, including hiring a new director to head this work. As this work gets off the ground, in 2023 we already supported a number of capacity building projects with our partners, notably in the strategic communications field:

- Our **PowerUp Academy** is a training and mentoring initiative for communications professionals at partner organisations in the energy field. Launched in 2022 and expanded in 2023, we now offer a suite of online skills sessions open to all of our partners, complemented by intensive in-person workshops. Nearly 500 partners registered for at least one of the online sessions in 2023, which focused on a range of communications skills, including data measurement and analysis, how to fight climate misinformation, and crisis communications. Participants cited several benefits from the training, including improved confidence and ability in key skills, as well as joining a community of practice of communications professionals working on energy issues.
- We also launched the **New Energy Academy**, a nine-month training programme specifically built for partners in Southeast Europe. The programme welcomed 26 participants from 10 countries, providing key partners with the skills and knowledge to successfully operate in the fledgling but growing field of NGO climate action.
- As part of our growing work programme in Ukraine, we held a **six-month training for 25 Ukrainian partners** in Kyiv. Each NGO was supported by a dedicated mentor — a top journalist who analysed the organisation's communications, provided proposals and guidance for future activity, and offered support for organising future campaigns. As a result, our partners have reached new audiences and helped generate greater public support for Ukraine's green recovery.



## A new Strategic Foresight capacity to strengthen long-term resilience

Alongside our capacity building work, our **Strategic Foresight** function, in its first full year of operation, has helped us to enhance our network's strategic resilience and make sure we maintain our impact on the ground in any eventuality. Using careful methodology honed over the course of 2023, we scan the horizon for major developments relevant for climate politics and policy — connecting dots, identifying gaps, and stress-testing our strategies against scenarios that have the potential to affect our work.

In 2023, we stress tested several strategies against potential scenarios related to the war in Ukraine and strengthened them against potential risks, boosting our work on energy security, trade and democracy. These efforts will expand in 2024, with plans to test several of our strategies against possible eventualities of the EU and US elections.



In 2023 we expanded our PowerUp Academy for partners working on energy communications



# Key figures and financials

## Building, diversifying and strengthening our network

Thanks to the generous support of our philanthropic partners, in 2023 we provided 1,683 grants to 703 partner organisations (representing a 24% increase in the number of grants from 2022). With 326 first-time partnerships, we have developed and expanded our ecosystem to new areas of action.

Notably, we increased our giving to non-environmental NGOs by 57% vs. 2022, with the intention of engaging with new and diverse organisations to bring fresh perspectives to the climate movement.

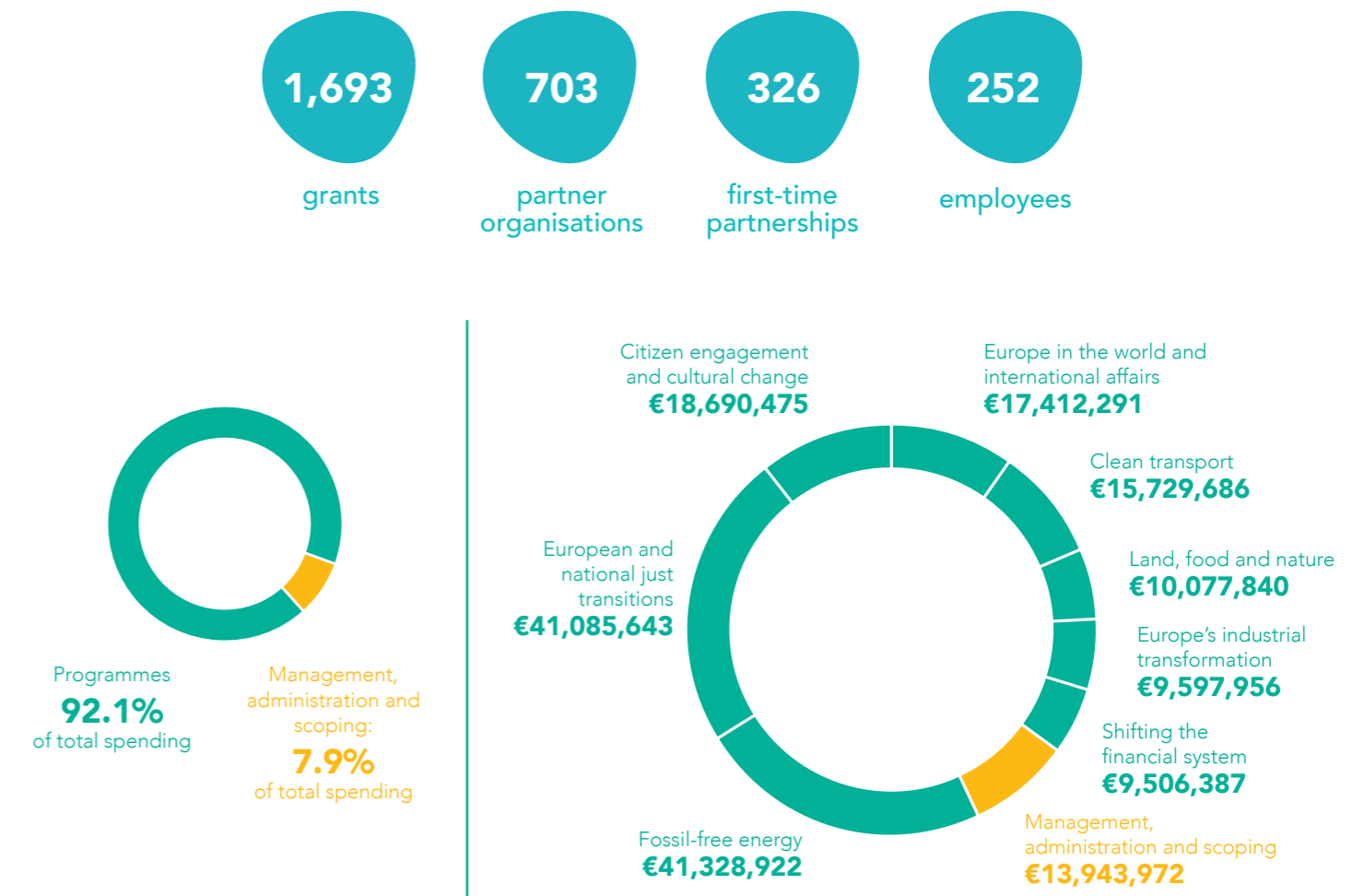
We have also built up grassroots local capacity with growing teams in **South East Europe** and **Ukraine**, increased grant-making in key sectors such as **Land Use, Industry, and Trade**, strengthened country-level communications teams, and are **boosting our data and analysis capabilities** to better support our network.

These figures are based on our latest audited financial overview from 2023. They cover regrantsing activities across our programme portfolios, as well as management, administration and scoping.

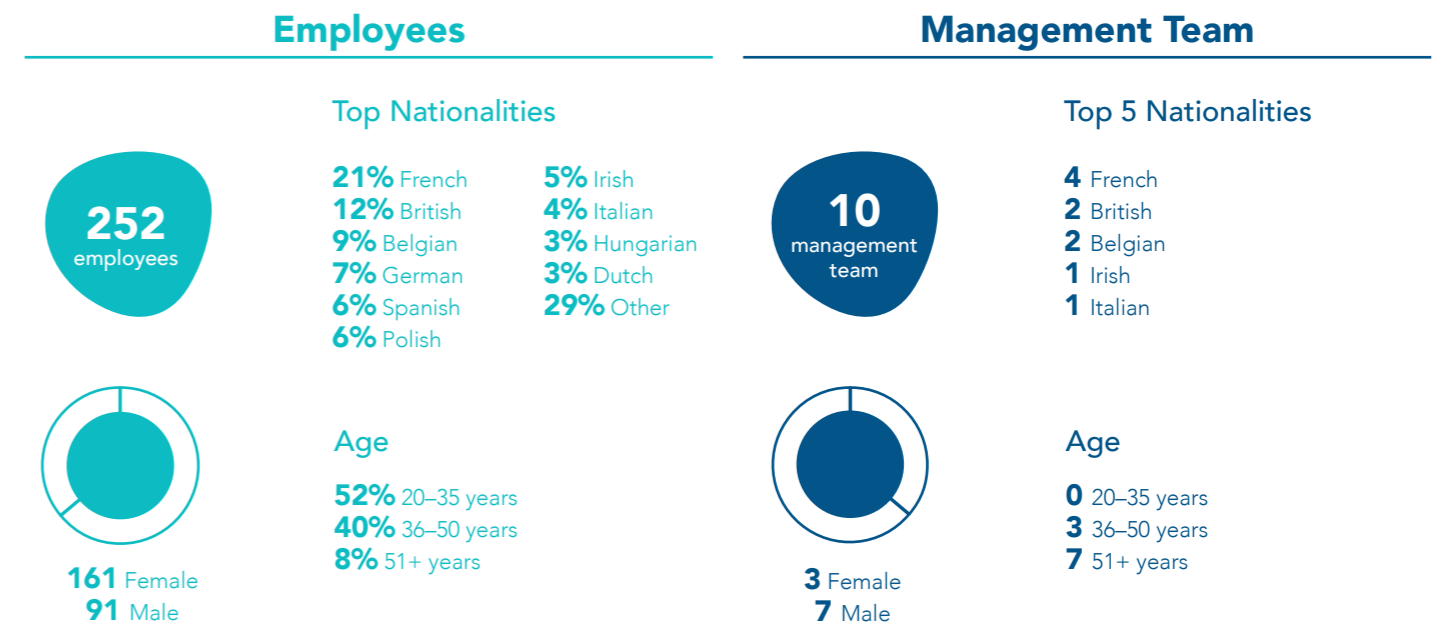
In addition to these programmes, we incubate platforms to create and build out new institutions that are needed for climate action. These include the [Pooled fund for International Energy \(PIE\)](#), [ReNew2030](#), [Forum New Economy](#), and [Climate Finance Fund](#). In 2023, ECF-hosted platforms had a total of 30 employees and €52,993,137 in expenditures.

Read more about our [funding partners, grant-making and governance](#).

## Key Figures & Financial Overview



## Employees and Management Team by gender, age and nationality



# Looking ahead

As we approach the midpoint of the decisive decade for climate action, the stakes are higher than ever — and we are facing strong headwinds. Multiple crises — from war to high inflation to growing polarisation — continue to roil the globe. As more voters than ever in history head to the polls in over 60 countries, results so far are worrying, with populist and far-right parties on the rise. Meanwhile, the civic space is shrinking in many countries, with a crackdown on NGOs in the climate sector and beyond.

Amidst these challenges, sustained investment in a people-centred just transition is essential to defend progress in Europe and deliver global impact. Europe is uniquely positioned to demonstrate the benefits of the transition across diverse national and local contexts, with a vibrant civil society, markets for solutions technologies, and commitments to phasing out the use of fossil fuels across all sectors of the economy. Europe also plays a catalytic role in advancing global climate ambition, with its diplomatic and political influence, role as a global standard setter with the world's largest single market, cultural clout, and as a major centre of public and private finance.

Yet the rise of anti-climate populist forces, concerns over costs and fairness of the transition, and deep socioeconomic shocks from war in Ukraine mean Europe's transition cannot be taken for granted. Europe must play a leading role, demonstrating that it can be done, and supporting others to also transition.

Here, climate philanthropy can play a critical role in tipping the scales. Philanthropic investment — more patient, risk-tolerant and flexible than government and corporate funding — plays a crucial role in the transformation towards the net zero world we and our partners are building. Yet worldwide philanthropic climate funding still accounts for less than 2% of global philanthropy, and is struggling to break this threshold. Indeed, after a surge of new philanthropies entering climate at the start of the decade, ECF and the climate community generally is seeing a slowdown in philanthropic growth.



To help address this, we are exploring the connections between climate strategies and critically interlinked areas such as nature, biodiversity, and adaptation and resilience, with a special focus on climate finance flows. Alongside this, we're boosting our investment in strategic communications, citizen engagement, and partnerships with new constituencies, with the aim to further broaden and deepen public support for climate action. We are also further enhancing our services to the field, in areas such as organisational development, convening and thought leadership, and deploying our new Learning & Impact model.

The road ahead won't be easy, but the window for opportunity to secure our future is still there. With our unique people-centred approach, and the support of our funders and our remarkable network of partners, we can accelerate critical climate progress.

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