

## Beatrice Weder di Mauro contribution Les Rencontres Économiques d'Aix-en-Provence

The global economic system and all human societies are facing rising levels of risks and uncertainties. Each year, the World Economic Forum issues a Global Risk report, which tries to measure current risks and to anticipate challenges we will probably have to face in the next few years. Some of the most prominent current risks are widely identified and not very new – the cost-of-living crisis; natural disasters and extreme weather events due to our failure to mitigate climate change; geoeconomic confrontation; erosion of social cohesion... We may not have identified all the risks we will be facing a few years from now, but if we do not find compelling solutions to those we are facing today, they will accumulate, probably worsen, and may become irrevocably out of control, while new problems will continue to arise.

The persistence of these complex issues shows there are no obvious and easy solutions to them. None have easy answers, and it may not even be possible to tackle them individually. The tools policymakers have used over the last decades to tackle these challenges appear to have been insufficient at best, ineffective or even sometimes counterproductive at worst. We thus desperately need new answers, new ideas, and a better understanding of the mechanisms at play.

There is no shortcut to establishing serious, compelling, and efficient answers: they can only emerge through science and research pushed to its highest standards. In public debates we can often hear a profusion of ideas and political views, but we should avoid any form of thinking that there are magic solutions. We urgently need to build a strong and widely accepted understanding of the issues we aim to tackle. If we cannot achieve such an understanding, we will likely fail to find a collective and efficient response.

In such an urgent context, it may seem more compelling to take immediate mitigating actions than to take time to study and analyse. Policymakers may fear that they will be challenged by constituents for inaction if they cannot show visible effort, and activists are usually pushing for a specific policy to be implemented rather than analysed. But while the risks are acute, if we rush to act without proper knowledge, we will only create more chaos, engage counterproductive efforts, and delay the implementation of any potential solutions. While political implementation carries its own difficulties, excellent science should be at the core of any policy design.

Ensuring that there is a strong research base prior to implementing what may be a disruptive policy may feel time and resource consuming, but it will ultimately save a lot of effort and is the only path that has a possibility of succeeding. It is lucky that the expertise, the minds and the research structures that we need in order to provide this research input for economic policy already exists. France and Europe shelter many top economic research centres, bringing together highly skilled economists showing expertise in every policy domain. This is an undervalued asset that policymakers at every level should rely on more, and that should be preserved and enhanced. This has been one of the core missions of CEPR for the last 40 years.

CEPR is dedicated to research excellence, as we foster high-quality and policy-relevant research by initiating, funding, and coordinating the research activities of our more than 1 700 researchers, who are all economists working in Europe and beyond. We believe that if we succeed in disseminating the research results efficiently to policymakers, economic policy will be enhanced and will be more

efficient, in France and Europe. To achieve this, we are constantly working on identifying emerging economic questions and encouraging researchers from our network to investigate them and present results which are at the frontier of current knowledge. A perfect example is the [Covid Economics](#) publication that CEPR developed in late March 2020, right at the start of the pandemic, when there were many questions and few answers to the crucial issues that were facing the world economy. CEPR mobilised its network together with the wider profession to apply established theories and techniques to quickly expanding real-time data to fill a vacuum in the well-established field of epidemiology. Epidemiologists tracked viruses, economists looked at people's behaviour and government responses. Between April 3, 2020, and July 2, 2021, we produced 83 issues of *Covid Economics*; drawn from 1,176 submissions of which 511 papers were published.

CEPR is active everywhere in Europe, creating links and research projects with and between every economic institution and university open to this objective, and disseminating the newest economic findings to public and private counterparts. In October 2021 we opened a new office in Paris and are in the process of moving our headquarters there by the end of September 2024. We operate with the financial support of the Banque de France, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry for Higher Education, and the Région Île-de-France, together with several private sector institutions. The Élysée has been a key supporter in enabling this expansion, as has Sciences Po, from whom CEPR is leasing offices near their campus.

As part of this expansion, we have developed several new [Research and Policy Networks](#) (RPNs) on topics relevant to the French and European policy debate, such as on climate change and sustainable finance, building on the footprint of the Paris Agreement. Or, to take a second example, we recently established an RPN on media plurality, led by Julia Cagé from Sciences Po, Paris.

We now organise our annual flagship Symposium in Paris, an occasion that brings together the CEPR community of Distinguished Fellows, Research Fellows, Research Affiliates, and Associate Fellows. The meetings are of clear interest to policymakers, given CEPR's focus on policy-relevant research.

Another element of our Paris expansion is our Flagship publication, the *Paris Report*. The first report, published in December 2022, was on [Rebuilding Ukraine](#), and edited by Yuriy Gorodnichenko, Ilona Sologub and myself. CEPR's work on Ukraine in the last 15 months is another example of our speed in responding to key policy events. The focus of the 2023 Paris Report will be on geopolitics, and will be edited by Jean Pisani-Ferry, Jeromin Zettelmeyer and myself.

CEPR will continue to focus and provide answers on pressing economic issues, particularly on the economics of climate change, and we have recently appointed Mar Reguant (Barcelona School of Economics and CEPR) as CEPR Vice-President for Climate. We will keep relentlessly creating and pushing forward high level economic research for policymakers to take into account while building the solutions which are much needed.

At its core, what makes CEPR truly unique and important is the size and quality of its network. With more than 1,700 researchers working in the most prominent universities and institutions across Europe and beyond, the network connects the best minds on large-scale collaborative research projects, which enhances research ambition and results. This also significantly improves the academic environment for economists in Europe, making it more and more attractive for them to work on the continent. CEPR researchers are incentivised to work together to find answers and solutions for most pressing policy questions and can get inspiration from the cutting-edge ideas and robust results the network is constantly producing. The power of collaboration is a very strong instrument that CEPR can rely on to pursue its mission of research excellence with policy relevance.