

Welcome note

Dear reader,

Welcome to 2024! As we usher in the new year and an EU election year, we invite you to explore our latest special-edition newsletter, where we chart our course for the exciting road ahead.

In the face of disheartening headlines affecting global food systems, we recognize the need to reconsider food security beyond production, addressing issues like food distribution and waste. As the EU elections approach in 2024, we observe concerning trends, including a hurried pace in addressing crucial matters within EU institutions.

The legislative push for creating a legal framework for New Genomic Techniques (NGTs), a controversial topic with high stakes, such as environmental protection and citizens and food producers' freedom of choice, is a notable example of such accelerated legislative processes endangering democracy. As this topic is crucial to the organic movement we continue to advocate for a precautionary approach and a right legal and technical framework to ensure organic and other GM-free production.

Additionally, we're vigilant about the substantiating green claims proposal, where we emphasise that the Product Environmental Footprint methodology (PEF) is ill-suited for assessing food and farming products' environmental impacts. Despite a win in 2023 where the Commission recognised the PEF's limitations for agri-food products, our work on this issue persists during the co-decision process.

Amidst the challenges, the significance of unity and extending a helping hand are all the more important. In this sense, we echo the proverb: "If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together." This special edition serves as a roadmap for 2024's political challenges and opportunities in the European Union.

Stay ahead of policy developments by [subscribing to our newsletter](#) or following us on [LinkedIn](#), [X](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#). Or [join us at events](#) throughout 2024, starting on 13 February for our Policy Day at [BIOFACH](#). Other opportunities are our bi-annual [Youth Event](#) in July in Italy, our [European Organic Congress](#) in September in Hungary and our regular Brussels-based Organics Europe meets business (December) and TP Organics' Organic Innovation Days.

I invite our members to avail of this newsletter special and its translations, offering a wealth of resources for informing regional, local and national organic actors in their own language. If you find something to translate, contact us at communication@organicseurope.bio. I would also like to remind our members about our organic masterclasses on narrative strategies and advocacy. All information and registration information is available on [our member extranet](#). Email us at membership@organicseurope.bio if you do not have access.

Despite the challenges, we pledge to be the united voice for organic food and farming with the EU institutions, rooted in our strong belief in organic principles.

Look forward to our March newsletter. Until then, have a great start to 2024 and join us at our upcoming events.

Don't panic, the future is organic,
Eduardo Cuoco

2024 POLICY	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL
GMO / NGT	Vote ENVI	Vote plenary Visuals BIOFACH session	Advocacy				
Green claims / Sus. label	Vote ENVI / IMCO (13) Visuals		Plenary EP Advocacy				
Soil			Vote ENVI Advocacy	Vote plenary			
Seeds			Vote ENVI Vote AGRI	Advocacy			
SFS law		Visuals	Organics Europe position paper				
SPP	Advocacy for minimum criteria		Open Food Conference Belgian Presidency				
SUR	Advocacy for new proposal						
Animal welfare			Work on position paper cultivated meat Advocacy animal transport proposal				
CAP			Strategic dialogue on future of agriculture	Advocacy for next CAP			
Promotion policies		BIOFACH session publication call proposals		Application process			
Textiles				Advocacy			
Climate		BIOFACH session 2040 climate target		Final CRCF agreement			
			Organics Europe position paper on climate neutrality				

Abbreviations

GMO – Genetically Modified Organisms
 EP – European Parliament
 NGT – New Genomic Techniques
 PP – Position Paper
 SFS – Sustainable Food Systems
 SPP – Sustainable Public Procurement
 SUR – Sustainable Use of Pesticide Regulation
 ENVI / AGRI – Environmental / Agricultural Committee
 CAP – Common Agricultural Policy
 IMCO – Committee on Internal Market & Consumer Protection
 EU CRCF – EU carbon removal certification framework

Legend

■ Legislative moments
 ■ Communications
 ■ Organics Europe advocacy
 ■ Others

EU ELECTIONS 2024

IFOAM
ORGANICS EUROPE

Looking ahead at 2024 political priorities – Policy activities.

IFOAM Organics Europe’s members find these dates in detail on [our member extranet](#).

2024 REGULATION	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL
Residue management		BIOFACH session					
International trade issues				Advocacy			
Lithothamnium	IGOP AGM initiative: call with MS experts at the beginning of 2024						
Annex VI	Regular updates of 2021/1165		External Working Group				
Future of certification (IGOC)	Briefing paper to Board						
Guide on flavourings		WG call	Updated guidance document				
EU-US equivalency		BIOFACH session	WG call	Advocacy			
NOP import certificates			LDO session when published				
Insects				EGTOP report first half of 2024			
Factory farming			EGTOP report 1st quarter of 2024				
C&D	Postponed till 2026		Presentations, letter to Commission and Member States	Advocacy			

Abbreviations

MS – Member States
 LDO – Lets Discuss Organic
 WG – Working group
 IGOP – Interest Group of Organic Processors and Traders
 NOP – National Organic Program
 ISOC – Interest Group on Organic Certification & Integrity
 AGM – Annual General Meeting
 C&D – Cleaning & disinfectants
 EGTOP – Expert group for technical advice on organic production

Legend

■ Legislative moments
 ■ Communications
 ■ Organics Europe advocacy
 ■ Others

EU ELECTIONS 2024

IFOAM
ORGANICS EUROPE

Looking ahead at 2024 political priorities – Regulation activities.

IFOAM Organics Europe’s members find these dates in detail on [our member extranet](#).



Policy implications for 2024

Inputs, from GMOs and pesticides to seeds

IFOAM Organics Europe has been advocating for the interests of organic farmers, operators, and businesses at the EU level for over 20 years. Our ongoing advocacy work focuses on maintaining the integrity of organic practices throughout the entire value chain. Recent political developments, particularly concerning new GMOs and pesticides, have raised concerns about the future of organic standards.

NGTs, an unproven piecemeal approach

In 2024, we will closely monitor the deregulation of new genetically modified organisms (GMOs) also called new genomic techniques (NGTs). After the Commission published its proposal in July 2023, the legislative process in the European Parliament and Council is in full gear. While the compromise text by the Spanish presidency was rejected by Member States on 11 December primarily due to concerns on biosafety, the impact of patents on the European breeding sector as well as co-existence with GM-free food production, the Belgian Presidency continues efforts to reach agreement among Member States.

On the parliamentary side, crucial votes are scheduled in its environment committee for January 24 and its Plenary in the week of 5 February. We strongly urge policymakers not to compromise on necessary transparency provisions and enforce supply chain traceability systems. This ensures that organic producers can confidently uphold their commitment to GMO-free production.

Are you at BIOFACH? Join [our session](#) to discuss.



Want to learn more on our work? Take a look at:

- Explainer video [“What are new GMOs and why we need to keep them regulated”](#)
- Press conference recordings [“The hidden dangers of NGTs in the EU”](#)
- Our living article [New GMOs – Key resources](#)
- More information, instant messaging and visuals in [our arguments database on the member extranet](#)

Our members can contact communication@organicseurope.bio about translating these materials.

For more information, please contact helene.schmutzler@organicseurope.bio. Do note that we prioritise our members' requests.

Patents on seeds and its consequence

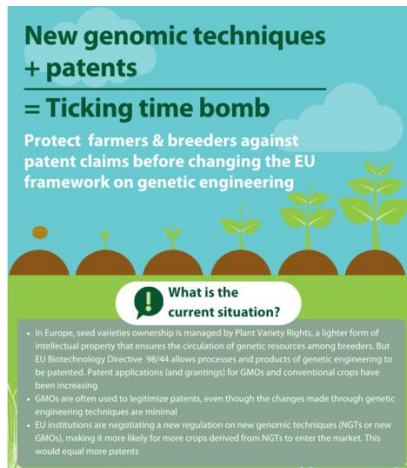
In 2024, a significant concern is the rising number of seed patents issued by the European Patent Office, posing risks of monopolisation and corporate dominance over genetic resources. This trend has already impacted small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), overshadowing organic breeding and challenging Europe's innovation and economic framework of breeding.

Unlike traditional plant breeding, genetic engineering, covered by the EU Biotechnology Directive 98/44, has seen a surge in patent infringement suits against SMEs, even for minor crop modifications or accidental contamination, irrespective of the breeding method used. In other words, the patent also extends to crops and traits derived from nature and conventional breeding. Given seeds' pivotal role in food production chains, this has profound implications for global food production.



While the European Commission's impact assessment acknowledges socio-economic impacts, a real solution to these concerns is absent from the legislative proposal. The proposed report on economic impacts by 2026 raises scepticism. It is vital to prevent new genetic technology legislation from taking effect without addressing indiscriminate patent application and intellectual property rights. Reviewing the EU legal framework to exclude genetic material and traits that can be obtained in nature or through conventional breeding from patentability, and enforcing traceability systems along supply chains during this period is essential. Given its connection to NGTs, we will closely monitor this issue throughout 2024.

Are you at BIOFACH? Join [our session](#) to discuss.



Want to learn more on our work? Take a look at:

- Paper [Sustainability in organic breeding. Improving the entire system or adjusting some genes?](#)
- Explainer video [Organic plant seed breeding and its contribution to food production](#)
- The [LiveSeeding](#) project

More information, instant messaging and visuals in [our arguments database on the member extranet](#)

Our members can contact communication@organicseurope.bio about translating these materials.

For more information, please contact helene.schmutzler@organicseurope.bio. Do note that we prioritise our members' requests.

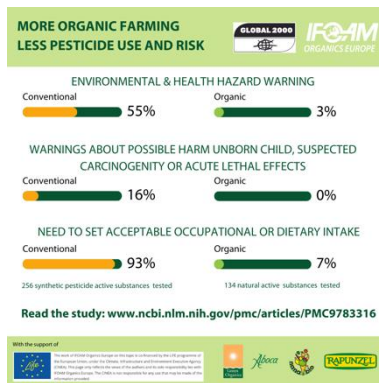
No binding pesticides reduction targets – Now is the time to reduce pesticides by fostering organic farming

These are difficult times for ambitious goals on reducing the risk and use of pesticides in Europe. In addition to the political challenges facing the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Regulation (SUR), other areas of contention include barriers to registering natural substances to manage plant health.

Facing the SUR's precarious situation and the risk of missing the 50% reduction target in pesticide risks and use by 2030, we are actively steering the debate back to the Council. Our efforts involve using all available resources to shape the discourse on the methodology and rectify perceived unfairness. Underscoring these actions is a messaging campaign commissioned by the German Environment Ministry, dedicated to advocating reduced pesticide use across Member States by highlighting the many benefits of embracing organic for healthy ecosystems and food security.

Together with our members, we continue working to ensure the EU's approval process of natural substances' is made easier. The most straightforward way to reduce the use and risk of pesticides in the EU is to foster organic farming and its many practices.





Want to learn more on our work? Take a look at:

- [Fact check: Pesticides in conventional and organic farming](#)
- Our leaflet [Plant health care in organic farming](#)
- Explainer video [Organic approach to plant health care and pesticides regulation](#)
- Press conference recordings [Conventional and organic pesticides compared](#)
- More information, instant messaging and visuals in [our arguments database on the member extranet](#)

Our members can contact communication@organicseurope.bio about translating these materials.

For more information, please contact maria.zintl@organicseurope.bio. Do note that we prioritise our members' requests.

Sustainable Food Systems

Last year, rising inflation, fuelled by geopolitical uncertainties, underscored the significance of food. While the European Commission should have responded to this crisis by ensuring a shift towards affordable, sustainable, and healthy diets, it backed down under the pressure of a productivism approach of food security. Alongside 25 scientists, we [voiced our concern in a letter to Commission President Ursula von der Leyen](#), emphasizing the absence of an EU legislative framework for Sustainable Food Systems (FSFS) and animal welfare in the Commission's 2024 Work Programme, despite their crucial link to the Green Deal.

To address these concerns, we advocate for a strategic dialogue prioritising the following principles:

1. **Take a food systems approach:** The strategic dialogue must take a holistic food system approach and look at the entire food system, from production to consumption involving all actors from farmers to food processors and retailers.
2. **Inclusivity and equal representation:** The strategic dialogue should involve civil society at large, businesses from 'the middle of the chain', farmers' organizations (including those representing smaller communities of farmers) food services, scientists, think tanks, regional and local governments, as well as the public. It should also adhere to the principle of equal representation, to make sure that all stakeholders are listened, including civil society representatives.
3. **Co-leadership: a cross DG-approach:** to establish a unified EU vision for the future of food and food systems, a range of issues must be addressed that extend beyond the realm of agriculture, including matters related to health, climate, environment, fisheries, and trade. Therefore, collaboration between the Commissions' different Directorate Generals is necessary to ensure policy coherence.

We will continue monitoring the strategic dialogue and ensure timely updates on its developments. In our work on this, we are part of the NGO-driven [Food Policy Coalition](#) (FPC), supporting an ambitious proposal for the Sustainable Food Systems Law.



› **FOOD LABELLING, PART OF THE SOLUTION?**
Examples of the Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) methodology



Want to learn more on our work? Take a look at:

- [Position paper - Organic & regenerative agriculture](#)
- [Organic, regenerative & conventional farming compared](#)

Are you active on this topic? We will continue doing the work for you! In 2024 we are working on more visuals on sustainability labelling.

Our members can contact communication@organicseurope.bio about translating these materials.

For more information, please contact laura.sauques@organicseurope.bio. Do note that we prioritise our members' requests.

Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

As the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)'s first year barely lies behind us, the European Commission is already deeply engaged in shaping the post-2027 CAP. The upcoming months are pivotal for determining the CAP's trajectory. IFOAM Organics Europe has initiated informal discussions on the next steps for the CAP, and official deliberations are commencing.

The Commission has launched a series of technical workshops involving various stakeholders on crucial topics. The first workshop, focusing on resilience, took place on 11 December. Recognising organic's significance, the Commission specifically invited IFOAM Organics Europe's farmer representatives to contribute insights, particularly for the breakout group on "Transformability." The next session, on food security, is scheduled for 5 February.

On 8 November, our team joined Good Food Good Farming's protest at the EU Parliament, urging for ambitious post-2024 election commitments and an end to support for the agrochemical industry with the slogan "We can't eat promises." IFOAM Organics Europe is also part of the [Good Food Good Farming](#) (GFGF) coalition uniting different European and local actors on the CAP, Sustainable Use of Pesticides Regulation (SUR) and the Sustainable Food Systems law (SFS).

It is imperative for the organic movement to engage early in discussions about the next CAP, given its substantial influence on the agri-food system and potential support for organic farming. With the CAP taking up 33,1% of the EU's budget, our involvement is crucial to ensure visibility and prevent organic considerations from being overlooked in the upcoming reform.

Within IFOAM Organics Europe, we have initiated discussions on the CAP with our Interest Group of Organic Farmers. Together with them, we collaborate, uniting and amplify organic farmers' voices at the EU level. Your active participation is key to ensuring the representation and influence of organic perspectives in shaping the future of European agriculture. Our Interest Group of Organic Farmers (IGOF) is one of our [four interest groups](#). They provide direct input from the different sectors in our work and positioning and formulate policies and positions relevant to their sector. IFOAM Organics Europe's members can access [a list of its current members](#) and [the terms of reference](#) on the member extranet. If you are an IFOAM Organics Europe member who is an organic farmer and interested to become part of the IGOF, contact laura.sauques@organicseurope.bio.

Other work we do relevant to farmers is ensuring (EU funding for) research and innovation. In the Horizon Europe project [OrganicTargets4EU](#) we research the potential and best ways to reach 25% of agricultural land under organic farming and a significant increase in organic aquaculture by 2030 – this is heavily linked to the



CAP's implementation. If you are interested in the research-side of farming, have a look at other projects we are a part of on behalf of and with the EU organic movement, like [ClieNFarms](#) that will set up 20 case studies to test solutions to reach climate-neutral farms, [Climate Farm Demo](#) that will set up a network of pilot farms in Europe and associated countries to increase and speed-up the adoption of climate smart farming practices. Organic practitioners find a wealth of resources on the [Organic Farm Knowledge platform](#).

Are you at BIOFACH? Join [our session on the CAP](#) to discuss.

Climate, soil & biodiversity

While the organic movement has from the beginning considered the question of climate inseparable from agriculture, its connection was formalised in the European Green Deal and during COP28, where more than 100 nations signed a resolution enshrining this connection. We see this as a clear mandate for organic agriculture.

Carbon Removal Certification Framework – positive developments but comprehensive approach lacks

IFOAM Organics Europe welcomes the European Parliament's vote on the EU Carbon Removal Certification Framework (CRCF), especially in relation to the initial proposal. Of particular significance is the Parliament's inclusion requiring carbon farming to positively contribute to biodiversity and ecosystems protection and restoration. This inclusion is essential to prevent a narrowed focus on carbon while omitting biodiversity – a prerequisite for effective, long-term climate mitigation and adaptation.

A significant departure from the original proposal is the option to certify emission reductions. While agricultural emissions need to be addressed, concerns remain about animal welfare, soil health, water quality and a focus on increase efficiency instead of reducing overall agricultural emissions. It is essential to ensure that practitioners already implementing practices increasing carbon sequestration and reducing emission are not penalized by a system requiring them to demonstrate additionality.

Currently, negotiations between the Parliament and Council on a final agreement are ongoing. Given the potential of greenwashing through carbon certification, we will closely monitor this topic. Are you at BIOFACH? Join [our session](#) and learn more.

Soil monitoring

With most soils in Europe reaching a critical state, the Commission took a significant step unveiling the Directive for Soil Monitoring and Resilience in 2023. This marks a positive move – compared to water or air, EU legislation on soils has so far been absent.

The Directive will require Member States to monitor soil health indicators, yet lacks legally binding targets or obligations to restore unhealthy soils. More organic agriculture would contribute to restore soil health on agricultural land as organic farmers use practices actively improving soil quality do not use synthetic fertilisers and pesticides.

The Parliament and Council are deliberating their respective positions. The June 2024 European elections will impact progress on this file if trilogue negotiations are not taken up before. We will continue monitoring the Soil Monitoring Law in 2024.

The Nature Restoration Law (NRL) – Overall win for a heavily contested law

In a landmark development, European Parliament and Council negotiators reached an agreement on the Nature Restoration Law (NRL), following fierce opposition – particularly against the legislation's agricultural targets.

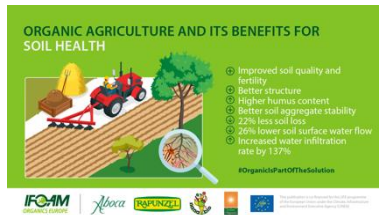
Despite weakening the Commission's original proposal, we appreciate that the final text includes targets for agricultural ecosystems, including restoring pollinator populations and biodiversity on farmland. Including



agricultural targets in the final agreement sends an important signal on the importance of healthy ecosystems for fostering resilient agriculture.

However, as a result of negotiated compromises, a new provision, the 'emergency brake', is now part of the text. This grants Member States the power to suspend the law's implementation on agricultural ecosystems in case of "unforeseeable and exceptional events beyond the EU's control, with significant EU-wide consequences for food security".

Upon the law's approval, each Member State must draw up restoration plans to achieve its targets. They have to use systemic solutions, including promoting organic and other agroecological farming practices to restore nature on agricultural land –offering opportunities to further organic agriculture's development.



Want to learn more on our work? Take a look at:

- Infographic of [organic's many benefits for climate and biodiversity](#) and [a more detailed overview and reference](#)
- More information, instant messaging and visuals in [our arguments database on the member extranet](#).

Our members can contact communication@organicseurope.bio about translating these materials.

For more information, please contact hanna.winkler@organicseurope.bio. Do note that we prioritise our members' requests.

Developing organic

Supply & demand

Our advocacy ensures that policies serve agricultural practices and practitioners, as well as policy support for organic products on the European market. Two such mechanisms with high potential are sustainable public procurement and EU promotion policies.

Public institutions, a market for organic

Sustainable public procurement (SPP) is crucial to enhance organic product's accessibility and facilitate that public institutions, such as schools or hospitals put them on the menu. This approach aligns with environmental and social goals and has economic benefits. By embracing SPP, organic products become more available and food producers industries get stable purchasers – offering a safeguard against an unpredictable market.

As IFOAM Organics Europe, we are part of the [Buy Better Food campaign](#), a European coalition advocating for organic and sustainable public procurement across Europe. It focuses on exemplifying cases and addressing challenges, aligning with EU Farm to Fork Strategy and UN Sustainable Development Goals. We are also part of [SchoolFood4Change](#), a project focused on making school meals enjoyable and healthy for our children and planet.





Want to capitalise on our work? Take a look at:

- [Infographics on SPP's benefits for the general public and policymakers](#)

Our members can contact communication@organicseurope.bio about translating these materials.

For more information, please contact silvia.schmidt@organicseurope.bio. Do note that we prioritise our members' requests.

Opportunities to communicate about and promote organic

In 2024, the European Commission allocated EUR 185.9 million to enhance the adoption of organic products through promotional policies. Specifically, EUR 64 million is designated for organic and sustainable products.

This reflects the EU Commission's commitment to opening new markets and aligning with policy priorities, providing an opportunity for our members to secure financial support for impactful campaigns promoting organics and raising awareness. We are organising various to walk the sector through this topic, like [our session at BIOFACH](#). [Keep an eye on our website](#) or contact silvia.schmidt@organicseurope.bio. Do note that we prioritise our members' requests.

Other Opportunities to make the entire organic supply chain more visible are the [EU Organic Day](#) and [EU Organic Awards](#) on 23 September. We will update our members about what comes up on those soon!

Access to knowledge

To continue improving organic practices, farmers and operators need a suitable policy framework, opportunities to research and innovation and access to knowledge sharing. In pursuit of this goal, we are part of [various research projects](#).

April 2024 will mark the start of a project on organic advisory networks, which we will lead. This will play a strategic role in fostering knowledge exchange and establish a network of organic advisory services, trained to support and guide organic farmers, thereby stimulating the transition to organic farming.

Also worth noting for 2024 is the Agroecology Partnership, a European initiative combining Commission and Member States resources to fund research aligned with the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) themes. It includes supporting activities to inform, consult, advise, and involve various stakeholders.

We coordinate [OrganicTargets4EU](#), a project analysing the socio-economic impacts of the targeted increases in primary production and markets and supporting advisory services and knowledge exchange.

Last but not least, practitioners can find practice-oriented material like factsheets, calculation tools, and videos on organic farming, helping them to become even more innovative on the knowledge platform for organic: [Organic Farm Knowledge](#).

TP Organics

Organic and agroecology want to transform food and farming. Public-driven research and innovation are pivotal in this shift. To make sure this is high on the EU and Member States' political agenda, we have forged a robust coalition with civil society organizations, researchers, farmers, and companies.

Together, we established [TP Organics](#), the European Technology Platform for Research & Innovation in Organics and Agroecology. It identifies research priorities and innovation goals, advocating for them to policymakers



within EU R&I policies like Horizon Europe and the European Innovation Partnership for agriculture (EIP-AGRI). It also facilitates research participation, provides funding information, and assists members in joining research consortia.

Find out more [about our role](#) and [TP Organics and its members](#). You might be interested in: [TP Organics; position paper on organic research and its contribution to sustainable food and farming](#) or [TP Organics' policy brief arguing on how organic contributes to food security in a systematic way](#).

Are you at BIOFACH? Join [TP Organics' Science Day](#) to discuss.

We do the work for you!

Are you active in the organic supply chain? You can tell we do much of the work for you! Consider supporting us by [becoming a member](#) or [sponsoring our work](#) however you can.

Are you a policymaker and would like to learn more about the work we do? Visit our website, access the topic page and contact our colleague mentioned.

Want to learn more? Visit our website at www.organicseurope.bio and [learn about the projects we are involved in](#).

You are also welcome to engage with us and join our community!

- [Join one of our events](#)
- [Subscribe to our newsletter](#), we send this six time per year
- [Submit your initiative transforming food and farming](#)
- Follow us on [LinkedIn](#), [X](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#)

They make it possible

These companies' contributions allows us to focus on our most important work – representing organic stakeholders. This funding co-finances our events, projects and publications and is a highly valued. Thank you!



The work of IFOAM Organics Europe on this topic is co-financed by the LIFE programme of the European Union, under the Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA). This page only reflects the views of the authors and its sole responsibility lies with IFOAM Organics Europe. The CINEA is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information provided.



Research projects IFOAM Organics Europe takes part to are funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting can be held responsible for them.

